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A
SHORT TREATISE
ON
'THE LIFE DIVINE'
(Vol. I)

SIDDHESWAR BANERJEE M. A., LL. B.

Registrar

Sri Aurobindo International University Centre

Lecturer of "The Life Divine"

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

PONDICHERRY

1956

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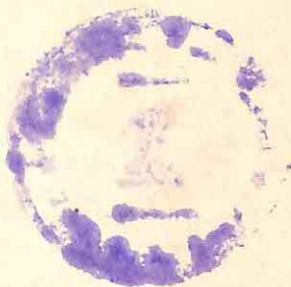
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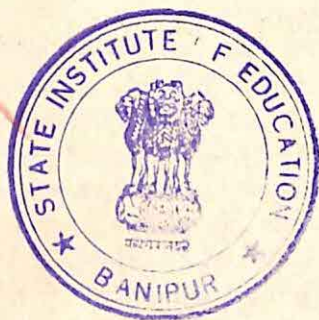
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TO
THE DIVINE MOTHER
IN
UTTER CONSECRATION



THE LIFE OF



It is with a sense of deep regret that we have to record the death of our friend and colleague, Mr. [Name], who passed away on [Date]. His death is a great loss to the community, and we are all deeply saddened by the news. Mr. [Name] was a man of great integrity, intelligence, and kindness, and his passing leaves a void that will be difficult to fill. We will miss his presence and his contributions to our work. The funeral will be held on [Date] at [Location]. We invite all who knew and loved Mr. [Name] to attend. Please contact [Name] at [Phone Number] for more information. Our sincere condolences go out to his family and friends.

PREFACE

It is with not a little diffidence that I have taken upon myself the task of writing this short treatise although my ambition is no more than underlining the important aspects of Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy.

The 'Life Divine' is the philosophical basis of his integral yoga and it goes much further than traditional metaphysics or the boldest conclusions of metaphysical thinking. Mere philosophical dissertations, as we know, have had little appeal for the seekers of the East and specially of India, for, it had been realised by them long ago that intellect could not be the proper instrument for the discovery of the Ultimate Reality. Truth or the Ultimate Reality would only be revealed in the spiritual experience or intuition of the seer, the mystic and the yogi. Besides, intellectual presentation of Truths revealed in spiritual experience would not have much significance if it did not indicate the method or lay down a rule of life that would help its realisation. It is more or less for these distinctive features that spiritual philosophy has, to such a great extent, coloured the civilisation and culture of India since the hoary past. True to this spirit of the East in general, and, of India in particular, the 'Life Divine' is the most comprehensive philosophical synthesis which presents to the intellect the nature of the Ultimate Reality seen by the greatest of mystics and seers that hallowed this earth with his advent and also lays down

PREFACE

and indicates a rule of life and integral sadhana which shall ultimately lead to its realisation.

The 'Life Divine' is not just a book of philosophy as we ordinarily understand it, to be read and passed over for another. For, so masterly is the treatment of the multiple aspects of the Ultimate Reality right up to the minutest details, and such is the profundity of the knowledge involved in its lines that a whole life spent over the book would yet leave untasted much of the delight of knowing newer and newer phases of the divine significance of creation. In fact, one can, at best, make it his life's Tapasya to drink deep from its fountain of knowledge and delight to his heart's content. Every line of this book breathes words of hope and cheer for stricken humanity and for man's deliverance from his toil not by self-extinction but by self-realisation.

Such is the mighty splendour of the philosophy on which I have ventured to write a short treatise and if the task seems to be difficult it is the blessings of the Divine Mother, which I humbly invoke, that will sustain me through my earnest endeavours.

I cannot come to a close before recording my deep debt of gratitude to Sri Nalinikanto Gupta for his very kindly finding time to go through the whole volume in spite of his various preoccupations.

SIDDHESWAR BANERJEE

Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry, dated The
24th of April, 1956

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CHAPTERS I, II, III

THE HUMAN ASPIRATION AND THE TWO NEGATIONS

SINCE the first dawn of ascertainable history, the mind of man has been faced with a problem that has baffled every effort at a satisfactory solution, and, it seems as if it is going to be an insoluble mystery till the end of the chapter. In fact, it was man's earliest preoccupation and it relates to the highest truth that the mind of man can think of. Stricken with all the poignant experiences of life, man felt extremely unhappy even in the midst of all the bounties of external nature, and he yearned for the Wisdom that would reveal to him the significance of the ultimate truths,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality. The pages of history bear clear testimony to man's constant endeavour to find the Truth that would reconcile the contradictions of his normal experience. Though impelled by mysterious whisperings from the Beyond, he is constantly foiled in his attempt to exceed his present limitations or to find a harmony among the various conflicts of life. Freedom from egoistic ignorance and the pain and suffering born out of it, exceeding the

present limitations of his physical, vital and mental make-up and becoming the divine playmate of the Lord have been said to be his ultimate goal. But these ideals seem to militate against the framework of his present nature, nay, they seem to be its direct contradiction, and as such, they are often given up as impossible of attainment. Though thwarted in his attempt to effect a reconciliation between the persistence of his aspiration and the seeming unrealisableness of it, man comes back again and again to the task of solving the various inconsistencies that assail him at every step. And well may he come back to this task, for indeed "all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony",¹ says Sri Aurobindo. And the quest for harmony in the midst of all the discords of life has been the burden of Man's search.

But this search proceeded through very different, nay often apparently contrary channels in different regions of the earth's surface. There was the ordinary material intellect which refused to consider the validity of anything that exceeded the limits of sense-experience or could not be woven by the mind out of the materials brought in by the senses. It took the physical senses to be the sole means of knowledge and dealt only with the facts which they provided. Physicality was thus taken to be the sole test of Reality.

Then there was a swing in the other extreme direction and pure Spirit was insisted upon as the only Reality.

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter I, p. 2.

Baffled in his efforts to find a connecting link between the apparent opposites of his experience, between the bondage of Matter and the freedom of the Spirit, between the pain and suffering of distressed humanity and the eternal Ananda of the Divine, and enamoured of the Beyond, he accepted the supra-physical as the only reality and looked upon this life as a mere dream devoid of any enduring substance.

Thus ran the currents of thought through two divergent channels, namely, the Materialist Denial and the Refusal of the Ascetic in Europe and in India respectively. Both tried to untie the knot by cutting it, both tried to solve the problem by denying it. Yes some of the extreme views even maintained that there had been no creation at all and any question about the truth or otherwise of this material world is irrelevant.

The denial of the materialist, although more insistent and immediately successful, is yet less enduring than the absorbing and perilous refusal of the ascetic. For "it carries within itself its own cure"¹ says Sri Aurobindo. The refusal on the part of the materialist to investigate or consider supraphysical phenomena, except as a subordinate activity of material forces could only last for a brief period. This complacency of rationalistic materialism in accepting Matter as the only reality could only be short-lived.

In his attempt to reduce everything to the terms of

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I. Chapter II, p. 11.

matter the materialist found it difficult even to explain the relationship between Mind and Matter, apparently two radically different principles. It was asserted by a certain school of thought that 'Mind is an emergent condition of Matter at a certain stage of its complexity'; thereafter solution was sought in the assertion that 'Mind is no more mental than Matter is material'. For, the further he proceeded the more difficult it became for the materialist to explain things in terms of matter. Even the conception of Matter,—Matter which was once taken to be an object of certain knowledge and directly seizable by the senses, became more and more confused and modern science has stumbled upon the fact that it is only certain properties of Matter, and not Matter-in-itself, that are seizable by the senses; nay, the properties look like the symbol of a certain Reality which is not presented to the senses. This led to a kind of agnosticism and it is remarkable to what extent some of the advanced schools of scientific investigation confirm in the domain of Matter the conceptions and even the formulae of language which were formed in the Vedanta. The researches of science are leading towards a Monism which looks perilously akin to the Vedic idea of one essence with its many becomings. Matter has been found to be itself a formulation of some unknown force.

It is therefore being questioned seriously, what after all is Matter? Is Matter knowable by the senses? Is Matter then unknown and unknowable? Indeed, Matter, as it is in itself, is and will continue to be unknown to the

external sources of knowledge but it need not remain the unknown for us unless we chose ignorance or persist in the first limitations. In fact modern science is wondering if after all Materialistic Monism is the Truth; the latest researches in the scientific world may drive the erstwhile non-believers in supra-sensible realities to a point which may further simplify and reduce to the vanishing point the barrier that divides the material from the non-material.

Thus through errors and stumblings the materialist has advanced much farther on the path of knowledge and he is knocking at the door which opens to a knowledge of integral Reality. Sri Aurobindo says, "In our world error is continually the handmaid and the pathfinder of Truth; for error is really a half-truth that stumbles because of its limitations; often it is Truth that wears a disguise in order to arrive unobserved near to its goal".¹ Moreover a certain kind of agnosticism is often the best approach to the solution of many problems and intense rationalism often chastens the intellect and helps to make it a better instrument for acquiring knowledge.

Unable at first to reconcile the apparent contradictions in external nature or to find any connecting link between the quiet and indeterminate Brahman of his deep spiritualistic experience and the bustle of world manifestation, the sannyasin becomes enamoured of the Beyond and insists on Pure Spirit as the sole Reality and a final dip

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I. Chapter II, p. 14.

and dissolution of his pragmatic self in the Vastness and Silence of the Being, the only salvation.

The materialist in his turn would have us believe that life is transitory and beset with all sorts of dangers and difficulties, and, as such, all human endeavours should be directed towards snatching whatever fleeting pleasures he can from a transient existence, or, lean towards a dispassionate and selfless service of the race and the individual. 'Materialism like spiritual Monism arrives at a Maya that is and yet is not'¹—that is to say, the world exists at the present moment and this experience is real and compelling, but it is phenomenal and transitory and, as such, it has no enduring reality.

At the other extreme, the ascetic firmly convinced of the unreality of the objective world treats the individual ego and all the phenomenal world as unreal and believes that the only rational escape from the meaningless tangle of phenomenal life is by a putting out of this brief taper of human life and a return to the Non-Being or the relationaless Absolute.

Thus tossed between the two extremes of human thought and experience, man's mind missed for a time the real and integral Truth which holds in its bosom the two apparently conflicting phases of Reality and assigns to both of them their meaning and justification as so many aspects of One Existence.

The materialist failed to perceive the Reality behind

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter III, p. 25.

the appearances, the enduring truth behind the fleeting phenomenal existence which is in fact its support and justification. Even in his search for the ultimate truth within the confines of physical existence, the materialist has had glimpses of supraphysical realities but they were scouted as unreliable evidence for the acceptance of any supraphysical Truth beyond the material organisation of consciousness. He failed to perceive that the worlds beyond exist and exercise their influence on our physical existence and on our physical body; the materialist failed to perceive that consciousness is the essential truth of existence and that there is one truth, one reality, which is gradually manifesting itself through the bewildering variety of world existence.

It is only by an extension of our consciousness that we can find the clue to the solution of these apparently contradictory conclusions. And this extension must be an inner enlargement from the individual to the cosmic consciousness. We have to start the search inside, find our real self as the centre of human individualisation, the real Person, and by enlarging the consciousness from the individual into the cosmic existence. Once fixed in that cosmic consciousness the individual begins to see things in a different perspective and reads a different meaning in material existence. And likewise we may enter into the world-transcending consciousness, exceeding all creations, a Beyond which seems to be the ultimate Truth of all existences, their basis and support, the One without a second, the only Reality.

When the mind passes into the Transcendence suddenly without intermediate transitions, it is overwhelmed with a sense of unreality of the world and the sole reality of the transcendent Silence and this becomes one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable. And the world-negating conviction of the ascetic is born out of this experience of the Pure Self or of the Non-Being behind it and it is the cause of a second Negation more perilous and devastating in its effects on the individual that hears its potent call to the Wilderness—The Refusal of The Ascetic. "...It is this revolt of Spirit against Matter" says Sri Aurobindo, "that for two thousand years, since Buddha, disturbed the balance of the old Aryan world, has dominated increasingly the Indian mind."¹

For centuries and centuries, saints, teachers, and persons whose names are sacred to Indian memory have answered to this distant appeal, viz., renunciation is the sole path of knowledge acceptance of physical life the act of ignorance,—the call of the Spirit, the recoil from Matter.

But Truth has to be sought in a larger and completer affirmation. The Vedantic formula 'One without a Second' has to be read in the light of the other truth, namely, 'All this is the Brahman'.² The sannyasin has not grasped the Reality in its full extent and

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter III, p. 28.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter III, p. 30.

comprehensiveness as the ancient Vedantins had done. Yet, like Materialism, Asceticism has rendered immense service to Life and the contribution of both towards finding out the final harmony is considerable.

CHAPTER IV

REALITY OMNIPRESENT

THE apparent incompatibility between certain experiences of the human mind, which has often led to directly contradictory conclusions with regard to the ultimate Reality, is principally due to an error of the mind itself. Accustomed to think in terms of division and distinction, the human mind is hard put to it when confronted with two seemingly opposite experiences and called upon to reconcile them. And, failing to find the true reconciliation, it has attempted some sort of compromise and often Unity had been sought by reducing everything to the terms of the One. But compromise is no solution—it is not a true reconciliation. The latter can be best arrived at through the utmost possible unification of Spirit and Matter, by finding out the intrinsic significance of both and not by accepting the one and rejecting the other as mutually exclusive entities.

It is by self-enlarging, by going deep within and expanding the Consciousness further till the Mind attains to the cosmic consciousness, that we can expect to find the Truth. And in the Light of the new illumination, Mind understands the import and realises the truth of Unity and the truth of Multiplicity, understands the proper functions of Mind and Life in the scheme of

creation. It is here in this state of enlarged consciousness that Mind finds the Divine harmony amidst the apparent discords that distress humanity. It is at this level of consciousness that Matter reveals itself as the figure and body of the Spirit and Spirit reveals itself as the essence of Matter.

The spiritual experience of the ascetic of the Silent Self is his abiding justification for denying the reality of creation. In the light of his discursive reasoning the two, namely, Silence and the Word, inactivity and activity appear to be mutually exclusive truths and cannot, as such, be predicated of the same Reality. If Silence is the truth, cosmic activity must be rejected.

The above conception however is extremely misleading and is born out of the limitations of the human mind accustomed to sharp oppositions of affirmation and denial and incapable of rising up to a sufficiently comprehensive consciousness which will hold the apparent oppositions in a simultaneous embrace. The truth of the Silence will not reject the cosmic activity, on the contrary it is the Silence that holds in its depth the infinite potentialities of manifestation and from which wells out eternally the Word that creates the world. The Word does no more than bring out what was self-hidden in the Silence.

It has been said in the scriptures, 'out of the Non-being, Being appeared'. To the human understanding it would seem at first sight to be a contradiction in terms! How can anything, it will argue, 'come out of Nothing and how can Being come out of Non-being?' But this puzzle

vanishes as soon as the proper import of Non-being is realised. Non-being is not the absolute non-existence or the negation of Being; on the contrary it is something beyond positive conception and contains in itself the potentialities of infinite manifestation. It is not a blank, a nothingness, so to say, but the free base of all cosmic existence. It is termed Non-being on account of its freedom from all positive terms of *actual existence*. It is not limited by any particular manifestation or any manifestation whatever, yet it is the source and support of all that has become and all that has yet to manifest in multitudinous forms.

Thus, Silence and the Word, Non-being and Being are not mutually exclusive truths, they are two aspects of one Reality; one is the basis and support of the other and sustains it. If we do a little bit of introspection we do find that inward calm helps a good deal in carrying out outward activities efficiently. It is flurry and nervousness inside that mars most human endeavours. It is perfect calm within oneself that alone can support a free and inexhaustible activity outside and in point of fact they are the two phases of our surface consciousness, the static and the dynamic, the former is the basis and support of the latter.

Hence we see that the limitations we impose on Brahman are due to the inherent incapacity of the human mind which concentrates on one aspect of the Reality and denies or disparages the other which, to his separative intellect, seems to be contradictory.

Besides, stung by the discords, evil and suffering that seem to be the unfortunate portion of human beings on earth and baffled in his attempt to find a clue to the solution of the other problem, namely, the incompatibility of Omniscience and Omnipotence of Brahman with so much suffering and anguish in the cosmos, the Illusionist sought to deliver Brahman from responsibility for its workings either by denying the reality of the world altogether or by foisting some dark principle of Maya—a real Brahman and an Unreal world!

Conceding for a fact that humanity is stricken, at least for the present, with pain and suffering, admitting that evil exists, there is no reason to suppose that they are permanent features of world existence or that the Creator is compelled by hostile forces beyond His control to keep man in perpetual misery. Indeed, frustration is not the last word in this cosmos. On the contrary, as the revealing dawn of spiritual illumination dispels from the mind the cloud of egoistic ignorance, all apparent discords and oppositions will disappear and it will be realised that stasis and dynamis, inactivity and activity are the two aspects of one Reality which transcends them both.

‘An omnipresent reality is the Brahman, not an Omnipresent cause of persistent illusions’,¹ says the Master. There is one Truth, one Reality and the Many are his becomings. The Truth that ‘Brahman is the One Reality’ has to be read in the light of the other Truth that ‘All

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter IV, p. 38.

this is Brahman'. Brahman is the Truth behind the phenomenal world which Nature is in travail to manifest through all the strifes and discords of life.

And the human traveller has to accept this creed as a matter of Faith which will help lighten his burden on his arduous journey towards the Light and Deliverance which awaits him at the end of his toil.

CHAPTER V

THE DESTINY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

BRAHMAN, then, is an Omnipotent Reality and it is the Truth behind all dualities, all contradictions, all variations that confront us on different levels of our consciousness. The apparent oppositions find their unifying solution in the Truth of that which is the basis and support of this bewildering variety of world manifestation.

But mind fails to form a proper idea of this Truth which is said to be in its nature indefinable. Persistent attempts of the mind have failed to form a total conception of the One because it exceeds all human affirmations and negations,—human language cannot define It nor can human thought bring It within its compass—It is Ineffable. In his search for the ultimate truth, the human aspirant often stumbled upon one or more aspects of the Reality and identified the Reality with that aspect only. The materialist conceived of the phenomenal world as the only reality, the ascetic insisted upon the immobile, indeterminate aspect as the real Reality and thereby identified the Reality with one of its several aspects, however general and comprehensive that aspect might be, and hence failed to get at the true Unity. These were attempts at a division of the Indivisible.

The insurmountable difficulty of the human mind is to reconcile the oppositions that confront it, to conceive how the One and the Many, can both be true at the same time. If 'One' is the Truth then the 'Many' must be false; if 'Unity' is the truth then 'Multiplicity' must be false. If 'Pure' Being' is the Truth how can this eternal becoming be accounted for? These and many other questions born out of a sense of trenchant distinction between the mathematical one and the mathematical many, between Being and Becoming, between Unity and Diversity assail the mind of the human seeker of Truth, and he is inevitably thrown upon the acceptance of one of the aspects as the Truth to the exclusion of the other. Vidya is the knowledge of the One and Avidya is the relative and multiple consciousness. We have to know both, with a view to having a comprehensive knowledge of Reality. For Vidya or knowledge of the One, alone, to the exclusion of the Many is as wrong and partial as Avidya or knowledge of the multiplicity to the exclusion of the One. Besides, in some of his spiritual experiences man is dazzled by the effulgence and calm of the immobile aspect of Brahman where there is no creation, no activity of any kind and as such he insists upon that aspect alone as the entire Truth of Brahman. Sri Aurobindo says, 'We become as men blinded by a light so that we can no longer see the field which that light illumines'.¹ Supposing, while moving in an enveloping darkness a traveller is suddenly confronted with a very bright light, he is imme-

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 43.

diately dazzled by the brightness of the light and for the time being he fails to perceive the area which is illumined by the light or the various objects that may be there. And if he does not proceed any further, he will return with the experience—*which to him is real*—that light alone is there and that nothing else exists. Similarly, in his spiritual experience overwhelmed by the Calm he fails to perceive the activity, lulled by the Silence he fails to hear the Word which is eternally floating out of the Silence which sustains this manifold creation. And thus unable to get beyond the trenchant distinctions of a partial logic, he declares that Silence is the Truth of his spiritual experience, and that the activity, the creation, is false, illusive.

The materialist, in his turn, considers God and the Beyond as illusory ideas. Accustomed to accept the evidence of the senses as the only materials out of which true knowledge can be acquired, he is unwilling to give credence to anything which cannot be brought within the ken of sense experience and, as such, he rejects, as fantastic, anything which smacks of the supra-physical—to him Reality is a synonym for physicality. Thus oscillating between the two extreme conceptions, Truth gradually emerges in its integrality out of the haze of half-truths and ignorance and reveals itself as the Unity behind the Diversity, as the One behind the Many. It is Brahman that has entered into form—the creation is the self-manifestation of the Divine.

The Spirit descended into Matter, step by step, through various levels of consciousness till at last it involved itself

completely in apparent Inconscience and the journey back is a gradual and progressive self-unfolding of all that was involved in phenomenal existence. This is the Divine significance of creation which is real as Brahman is real and is not a stupendous illusion nor an unreal reality. And the destiny of the individual is Divine. He is not a crawling insect wallowing in mud and misfortune during the span of a troubled existence and awaiting deliverance through extinction of his being. He holds under the mask of his pragmatic consciousness the Divine Person, the Chaitya Purusha, that is destined to lead him, step by step, however feebly and indirectly at the outset but, steadily and unerringly towards his goal, the Divine destiny that awaits him at the end of his journey.

Brahman expresses Himself in many successive forms of consciousness, but in proceeding from the one to the other the preceding form is not given up or renounced; on the contrary it is taken up and transformed. This will become clear to us if we look back in retrospect and survey the trend of evolution up till now, that is to say, how the physical world proceeded from Matter to Life and from Life to Mind and intelligence in human beings. Before the appearance of Life on earth everything was in a nebulous condition and so hot was the atmosphere that any form of life, even in embryo, was not conceivable. The hot gas and vapours gradually cooled down to solid earth and the first rudimentary form of life appeared in the plants and shrubs that sprung from the earth; there-

after consciousness slowly manifested itself in the tiny insects, animalcules and through the lower animal world right up to the level of human mind and self-consciousness. We have to notice that in the process of the evolution of the three dominant principles so far, namely, Matter, Life and Mind, the subsequent principle established itself not by renouncing the preceding one but by taking it up and transforming it. That is to say, when Life first appeared in the plants it did not cast away the preceding principle, namely, matter, but matter was partially transformed into bodies of the plants fit to hold the first glimmer of life. Similarly the same process was followed in the next stages also and mind appeared in a living human body sufficiently transfigured and made a fit vehicle to hold the Mental principle. Thus in passing from one domain to another, from Matter to Life and from Life to Mind, Nature has not cast away the preceding one. The preceding one has been taken up, transfigured and made the basis of the next dominant principle. And there is no reason why this process of self-manifestation of the Divine shall stop here. This process is bound to proceed and proceed *integrally*, that is to say, by taking up and transforming this physical-vital-mental being, so that, it can become a proper vehicle for the manifestation of the next and final dominant principle namely, Supermind. And in this final denouement the individual has to satisfy the conditions of the Divine manifestation as indicated so far by the trend of spiritual evolution, namely, not by a rejection of the

physical-vital-mental basis in our attraction for the spiritual, not by abandoning the lower to itself but by transfiguring it in the light of the higher so far attained and thereby attain the true divinity of Nature. Thus has been imposed upon man the divine destiny of fulfilling God in himself,—starting with all the disabilities of an animal vitality and led by the ignorance of an ego-centric mind through the mazes of births and deaths, Man is destined to cast off the shackles of his egoistic ignorance and become the transformed individual, a fit receptacle for the manifestation of the Spirit and attain Divine Life on earth. To become the divine companion of the Lord in this His Lila of creation is man's divine destiny for which Nature is in travail since the beginning of creation.

Having missed this ideal of integral manifestation of Brahman, the ascetic impulse sought God in another direction. The individual, the mere man, is conceived as a separate being within the universe and both the individual and the universe as dependent upon a Reality which transcends both. To this Transcendent Reality is given the name of God who is conceived to be extra-cosmic. The individual and the universe being, according to him, a lower order of existence, salvation was naturally taken to be the attainment of the Transcendental and the cessation of both the individual and the universe.

Reality is integral, it is the One that is manifesting itself in the individual and the cosmos and while transcending both the individual and the cosmos it holds them in its Divine embrace. This physical world started

on its journey from a state of apparent inconscience and out of inconscience consciousness has appeared by a slow and difficult process of evolution—from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind—and the individual though still groping his way forward in the faint and uncertain light of an egoistic ignorance is not the last word in creation. The individual is the centre of the universe and it is through him that the universe will become conscious of itself and it will be in him that the Divine will manifest Himself in all His plenitude.

It is indeed a drama of self-concealment and self-discovery, as it is the Divine that concealed Himself in material inconscience and it is the Divine that is slowly but steadily extricating Himself from the trance of material nature; the ignorant individual groping and tottering through life, stricken with all the bitterness of mundane experiences, is no other than the Lord Himself, and, the ignorance, nothing else than the Mask He has put upon Himself with a view to tasting the delight of a novel experience in this terrestrial adventure. And the illumination of the individual, the casting aside of this Mask of ignorance and separativeness, is the Supreme need of this world play. The individual is real, the individual is eternal, and it is his egoistic ignorance that is pragmatic and temporary and it will be cast off by his illumination.

If the individual were unreal and illusory as some of the extreme views maintain, then his release, his salvation would also be unreal, illusory. How can we conceive of a real escape from an unreal bondage? If the individual is

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illusory, his bondage is also illusory and his salvation then would have no meaning.

It is on account of some of the irreconcilable oppositions that we have set up between the Self and the world, the Absolute and the relative, between the Illimitable and the limited, that we are driven to the aforesaid paradoxical conclusions. It is only by taking a comprehensive view of things that the oppositions can be overcome.

The Unity has to be conceived as the basis of the many-sided manifestation, the Absolute is to be understood as free to include in itself all possible terms of its self-expression and not a mere empty nothingness from which nothing can come. The Freedom is to be understood as that which is not bound by its own liberty. It is unrestricted freedom alone that is capable of restricting its own freedom. It has been argued that Brahman is Illimitable and as such how can there be a real and yet limited individualisation? Sri Aurobindo says that, the powers of Brahman are also illimitable, how can we put a limit upon them?

Thus the Unity establishes itself in the three conditions of Sub-conscious, the Conscient and the Superconscient—Materiality, Mentality and Supramentality. The human mind is in a state of partial ignorance and the liberation of the individual from this state of ignorance is the keynote of the primary divine necessity of creation. And the Light of the liberated soul will radiate its effulgence—horizontally as well as vertically, its unity with God,

the One, will be completed by its unity with the cosmic Many.

The individual has to attain to the Highest without cutting himself adrift from the cosmic extension, and his liberation will mean only his liberation from egoistic ignorance and bondage and all the disabilities born out of it. Liberty has to be gained by self-discovery and not by self-extinction. Spirituality has to be established not by cutting adrift from Mentality but only by an integral transformation of the physical-vital-mental basis of his individuality.

CHAPTER VI

MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

THE universe then is not a deceptive trick of Mind. It has an aim and purpose, nor is it a fact that world-existence has been shaped by the impact of blind forces and it is helplessly tossed about without any secret intelligence, within, to direct its process and motion or to lead it to any preconceived goal. On the contrary the truth about the phenomenal world is that a self-aware existence is involved in it, possesses it and that Existence is gradually manifesting itself through the process of evolution and unfolds itself in the individual. This all-guiding Truth of things which is involved in phenomenal existence is directing the trend of evolution and it is the same Truth that mysteriously attracts mortal man and draws him out of his preoccupations with material wealth and splendour. It is the same Truth that at last reveals itself to his consciousness and thereby helps his divine ascension. This is indeed the secret of man's divine discontent and this Truth is no other than Sachchidananda—Bliss-Existence-Consciousness—that is slowly, but surely, emerging out of the apparent contradictions of the phenomenal world. It is the Divine principle that will solve all contradictions, all oppositions, not by effacing them out of existence but by revealing their underlying

unity. The creation brings out only a small portion of its infinite potentialities. This Divine principle which veiled Itself completely under the mask of dark and inconscient Matter, at the very inception of this world, reveals itself step by step, first as Life in the vegetable world right up to self-conscious human mind which is only a distorted reflection of its plenitude. Mind is only a middle term and the process of self-manifestation will not stop here. Mysterious yearnings in the human heart bear witness to his Divine destiny and the complete manifestation of the infinite Bliss-Existence-Consciousness in the individual is the consummation towards which this creation is proceeding. It is Sachchidananda who is the object of man's quest and aspiration in this his terrestrial adventure. It is indeed the distant strains of His bewitching Flute that wean man away from his material preoccupations, from all that he holds dear in life.

It is the Unknowable, the Formless, that has taken form and descended into manifestation through two essential appearances, namely, the universe and the individual. It is a gigantic Lila of Self-concealment and Self-revelation. The Infinite, the Superconscience gradually descended, step by step, into material nature. It concealed itself, put veil upon veil, as it were, round its Superconscience till it disappeared completely under the mask of inconscient Matter and It is undertaking the journey back, step by step, by a gradual ascent from Matter and removing veil after veil which it had put upon Itself; It is waking up, so to say, from its sleep of inconscience

and proceeding towards Self-revelation. Thus each step in the descent of Sachchidananda is necessarily a step in ascent for the individual seeker.

This in short is the play of self-concealment and self-revelation and as we make a survey of the world processes we appreciate the correct import of this play of the Divine. It was dark and inconscient Matter, immobile, not a sign of Life nor the faintest ray of Consciousness visible anywhere—this was the look of this world in the very beginning. But the inconscience was a mere mask under which Superconscience concealed its real nature, and, as such, the involved consciousness is gradually releasing itself from its self-imprisonment in Matter through the process of evolution. First, Life, then consciousness, at first a comparatively faint glimmer as sense-mind in the animals, it gradually enlarged itself into self-conscious individuality on the human level. The apparent inconscience of Matter could not have been a 'negation' or absence of consciousness, for, in that case, life and consciousness could not have come out of it: consciousness was involved in Matter and that is why it is gradually manifesting itself through a slow and difficult process of evolution. It was the consciousness of the Divine that was involved in Matter and as such what was involved must evolve. Hence, this process of evolution has to proceed further and man has to exceed his present ego-centric consciousness, mount to a higher level of ascension till all ignorance is dispelled and there is complete self-finding. It will be then that man will

find out the truth of his being and the truth of this universe as the self-manifestation of the Divine and thus stand united with each other in eternal harmony. All oppositions, all discords that assail him at present will disappear and all conflicts will stand explained, reconciled by the underlying unity.

Before the dawn of self-consciousness in man the World moved as if in a state of somnambulism, unaware of and yet impelled by a Force that moved it from within and brought it to its present level where the divine discontent of man is a constant urge towards exceeding his present limitations and reaching his ultimate goal. Indeed, original inconscient Matter was not aware of the treasure it held in its bosom nor the dynamism it held captive under its apparent immobility.

For the fulfilment of this Divine destiny, the universe and the individual are necessary to each other. The universe cannot realise the divine totality even in infinite extension. It could be an extension without limit and even then in such extension the divine totality would remain unrealised. And that is why the individual has been created, a self-conscious individual, a self-conscious concentration of the Divine dotted over the entire universe through which it will realise the Divine. And the individual, on his turn, has to impersonalise himself through the universe with a view to realising himself. He has, in other words, to break the bounds of his egoistic ignorance, enlarge his consciousness and thereby impersonalise himself with a view to performing the divine work for which

he has taken his birth. "No mere superior mammal is he", says Sri Aurobindo, "but a conceptive soul basing itself on the animal body in Matter".¹ His animality is an inferior term of his existence; what we call his mind, intelligence, rationality, is only the middle term; he has yet to find a supreme term and affirm it in his present existence,—a term essentially superior to his present self and which will be the basis of his divine life on earth.

Impelled by the undefined whisperings of his Divine destiny, man gradually awakens to a deeper self-knowledge and often gets a glimpse of the Truth that he has to affirm in his being, that he has to become in his life. But at the initial stage of his illumination he gets no more than an occasional and faint glimpse of the Truth, and, as he tries to grasp it in its entirety, to know it utterly, it eludes his grasp and often he is confronted with a double night—"... a darkness below, a mightier darkness beyond".²—That is to say, his failure to grasp the Omnipotent in its plenitude leaves him wandering in a night of darkness, and even as he looks round his environment he is faced with the opposites of his affirmation. With pain and evil, death and disability hampering his sadhana at every step, his reaction is often one of negation of God, the object of his quest. He cannot reconcile Omniscience, Omnipotence, Love, Beatitude and all the exalted conceptions of God and Divinity with the poverty, squalor and all the poig-

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter VI, p. 56.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter VI, p. 57.

nant experiences of life and he is driven to deny God altogether or to form some distorted conception of His true and eternal reality. And out of these conflicts arise many conceptions denying the reality of creation and so he seeks an escape from it as a mere disastrous illusion. For how else is he to reconcile the facts of his poignant experiences with the Ananda and Omnipotence of Sachchidananda? Indeed, the wrongs, evil and sufferings that stalk this world are facts, though temporary, but the proper way to understand them is not by refusing to consider them or putting them down as the result of an illusion which has to be got rid of by self-extinction.

How then are these contradictions to be explained? What is it that brings fleeting joys and lasting sorrows into human lives? Are they likely to be the result of a wrong attitude, a false notion towards God and nature, towards self and environment? It is due to an ignorance of oneself and of the world and of his ultimate destiny that is the cause of all the sufferings of this world. But they are not permanent features of earthly life nor are they the punishment meted out to man for his earthly adventure. They are, rather, the barriers he has to cross, the hurdles he has to negotiate with a view to reaching the promised land. In fact, they are the price he has to pay for his divine ascension. It is a hard and difficult process by which Consciousness that fell into a swoon of inconscience, so to speak, before the very inception of this world process, is gradually waking up, escaping out of the encasing Matter—it is the ransom that is

being paid to Matter for the release of the Spirit.

But it may be asked, how can pain and anguish be converted into Bliss and Delight? They are evidently contraries, how can the one pass into the other? One can understand if one is told that the chances of pain and suffering will be completely eliminated by death of the body and dissolution of the individual, how else can contraries be reconciled?

The problem will not seem to be insoluble if the apparent contraries are manifestations of the same Reality. If Sachchidananda is the basis of all manifestations, divine or undivine, pleasurable or painful, then indeed a hope of reconciliation, a divine transmutation may be possible. Yet it is difficult for a logical mind to accept this solution as satisfactory, and doubts and difficulties would continue to arise. But it can be accepted as a basis to go upon, to strive for divine life.

In our attempt to find a solution to these baffling problems of terrestrial existence, we are trying to peer into the mysteries of the Ineffable and the Unknown. Human logic is too poor an instrument to probe into its depths and human language too poor a vehicle to express the precious finds. We have to free ourselves from the meshes of human logic, dive deep behind phenomenal appearances and go into unfathomable depths of consciousness and may then get a faint glimpse of the truth of the Ineffable and finally return with just sufficient hints to help the soul's journey and light its path towards its ultimate destination.

CHAPTER VII

THE EGO AND THE DUALITIES

IF Sachchidananda is the abiding Reality behind creation, evil and suffering must needs be the result of ignorance, division and distorted consciousness. For, nothing but Ananda can come out of Ananda and this undoubted opposition in our consciousness, between the Truth, namely, Sachchidananda, and its manifestation can only be understood by the removal of ignorance and the recovery by the human soul of a higher knowledge—the oppositions will then stand explained, reconciled in the light of an underlying Unity.

From a surface view of things it is difficult for the human Reason, committed to division and separateness as its basis of acquiring knowledge, to regard the various afflictions to which this world is subject as anything else than the notes of a discord and our task is to find the harmony behind the discords, the unity behind the separation. But we have to exceed our present consciousness and bring about a radical change in our mode of acquiring knowledge before the truth of this diversity stands explained in an all-embracing unity.

The values which we set upon various things and happenings and the terms into which our present consciousness renders them may be good enough for the time

being or they may be justified for the purpose of human experience and progress; but they are not necessarily the correct ones, nor the right or ultimate formulas to which the said events can be rendered. There may be more enlarged states of consciousness from which one may get a more integral, a more detached view of things when pain and evil and all the poignant experiences of our present consciousness may not appear to be what they seem to us today.

Just as there may be sense organs much more powerful than ours which would see the face of the world very different from what we see it today with ours, so there may be states of consciousness more illumined than ours which would see the true import of discords and divisions and set fresh values upon them. Our judgments and our conclusions based upon the evidence of our senses or our sense experiences may have some temporary pragmatic value but they are not necessarily the truth and they may be corrected by a better and improved method of perception. This is also true of some of our direct sense experiences of the physical world. Let us take some concrete illustrations: to our ordinary perception the earth appears to be flat, the sun seems to 'rise' in the East and 'set' in the West, and try how we might we shall not be able to convince the uninitiate that the truth about the Earth and the Sun is just the opposite of what we see and that the testimony of our direct sense experience is not dependable. The 'improved' perception through scientific methods reveals on the contrary that

the earth is round, that the sun is fixed in relation to the earth, and so on. Similarly by a gradual enlargement of our mental consciousness we may be able to see the apparent discords and disharmonies of life from a different perspective when they will no longer appear to be irreconcilable opposites.

But the practical values set upon certain things by our senses and dualistic sense-mind must be accepted as the standard for ordinary life experience until we develop a system of knowledge which will explain the reasons of the misconceptions of the sense mind and assign the right values to the evidence of the senses. Simply enlarging the faculty of our senses without developing the proper knowledge to explain and set proper values on the improved sense perceptions would lead to confusion. The discovery of the truth that the sun does not move round the earth and that my sense perception is erroneous and as a matter of fact it is the earth that is moving round the sun, would have puzzled and thrown human beings completely out of their wits if there were not a science, a system of knowledge, which explains the correct state of things, the reasons of our misconceptions and also setting correct values on the perception of our senses. This is no doubt the rationale of the injunction in the Gita not to disturb the life-basis and thought-basis of the ignorant until his ignorance is replaced by requisite knowledge.

Next, there is another pet conviction of the ordinary mental consciousness that God, the creation and all that

is worth having in life are moving round our personal ego; that is to say, it is for the ministration of the human ego that the whole creation is toiling, and, as such, we judge His ways and works according as they succeed or fail to perform this task. We judge everything, mundane and supra-mundane, by our egoistic sensations, emotions and conceptions and give them such values and interpretations as are useful for human life and progress at a certain stage, though these conceptions are often perversions of truth. But to disturb these simple and practical ideas without replacing them by something better, or to appal the human mind with the mysteries of the Ineffable would lead to a violent disorder of right values and to great confusion. It is necessary to build up a reasoned and effective system of knowledge in the light of which the egoistic life shall rediscover the real values of its phenomenal experiences. The ego will then discover that it is the Divine that is the centre of all existences and is also Universal and Transcendent, and the Mind of division and separateness is only a middle term which has to be exceeded with a view to our seeing the Truth.

The ego has to renounce its false standpoints, false notions and perceptions and find out the truth about itself—a truth that shall be its fulfilment—and bring itself under a law that will deliver it from the meshes of egoistic desires and ignorance. The ego will have to find out that it is its very restricted view of things that gives it wrong and distorted values of things. Man has to open

himself to a truth that will be his fulfilment and bring himself under a law that will exceed the petty conventions of his egoistic life. He has to realise that his present ignorance is only a temporary veil which hides behind it a light and vastness which is the real truth about himself; and his goal shall be the casting aside of that veil of ignorance and thereby transcend the limitations and all the poignant sufferings that beset his pragmatic consciousness.

But is it possible to transcend the limitations on this earth, or escape death and disability by the human body? These are indeed pertinent questions having regard to our present level of knowledge and consciousness, and according to the egoistic valuation of life, death and dissolution is bound to be the inevitable end of the human body; pleasure and pain are bound to be the two phases of all human sensations, and joy and grief must be the two emotional experiences between which the mind of man must oscillate. How then is it possible to escape from all these evils on this earth and to which human life seems to be permanently wedded? If, of course, it is taken for granted that on this earth life is perpetually condemned to all its present sufferings and limitations then indeed salvation or transcendence of these imperfections can only be possible by extinction of the self in Nirvana or in some other supra-physical plane—in a heaven perhaps—constituted quite differently from the material universe.

Circumscribed as we are by the limitations of the

human reasoning and having no knowledge of the glorious destiny of the human individual, it is difficult for man to conceive of an existence human yet radically changed, and his mortal frame of 'flesh and blood' undergoing such a transformation as to enjoy a permanent immunity from death and dissolution, his mind free from all agonising experiences and his body life and mind completely changed into the Divinity that is his destiny. No it is not possible for man at the present stage of his knowledge-ignorance to envisage such a glorious future for himself and on this earth too, just as it would have been impossible for the original Ape to imagine that some of his species would pass through a process of evolution and develop into a species of animals that would come to be known as 'man' with a dominant mental faculty, to be called 'rationality', and would be able to perform all the wonderful things that now stand to the credit of humanity.

It is true that man is not satisfied with his present conditions, however exalted they may be at times, and he dreams and dreams and aspires to a state free from pain and suffering and the dualities of mundane existence, to attain to a state of perfection and free himself from all incapacities and limitations and live in everlasting happiness. But his Reason steps in and shatters all his pleasant dreams and it becomes hard for him to believe that all his aspirations can be fulfilled here on earth. Hence man tries to reconcile himself to his present lot and to make the best of his limited and conditioned

existence with the aid of his precarious knowledge.

Human reason in its pursuit of knowledge is always trying to exceed or transcend ignorance; it is not satisfied with the present state of its ignorance, believes in some pre-existent truth and tries to reach it by transcending the present ignorance. But as regards the higher aspirations of humanity, the Reason takes them to be just instinctive aspirations of the human mind, not possible to be realised on this earth, because Reason lacks that illumination which would reveal to it the truth of the loftier ideals of man and guide it towards their attainment.

But in spite of the acceptance by the rational mind of the imperfections of the flesh as invariable concomitants of life on this earth, there is a constant urge in the human mind to eliminate from life these adverse circumstances, namely, death, disease, sufferings, as far as possible and even attempt to prolong life indefinitely. But it fails to achieve the desired result as it focusses all its attempts on removing only the secondary causes of human suffering. If only we could go to the root of things, understand the essential nature and cause of error, suffering, death and disabilities, then we could hope for a complete mastery over them, nay, eliminate them altogether from life. Thus the human Reason has been, throughout the ages, groping in vain for a solution of the baffling problems of life.

The ancient Vedanta gave us the solution of the various paradoxes that confronted human understanding by revealing the true character and function of the individual ego in the conception and experience of Brahman as the

All-pervading Reality and the nature of Brahman as Sachchidananda.

The individual ego is the result of self-limitation of consciousness—by an exclusive absorption in one form, one field of movements and a willed ignorance of the rest of the field of consciousness. The result is that the ego does not get an integral but only a restricted and distorted view of things and as such it puts wrong values to movements and determines wrong reactions of pain and evil and all the sufferings to which we are subject. By participating in the consciousness of the Totality and that of the Transcendent the individual may discover the true values of ego-determined reactions and see pain and evil in their correct perspective. This aspect has been dealt with in extenso in a later chapter.

In later Vedanta according to some schools of thought, the ego is not only the cause of all our sufferings but also the condition for existence in this universe. And by removing the egoistic ignorance it is possible not only to eliminate pain and evil but along with it our very existence on this earth. Thus according to these schools of thought human existence is essentially evil and permanently stricken with pain and suffering and all attempts towards improving this state of things, not to speak of attaining perfection, are futile.

But according to a profounder conception the ego is only a middle term, an intermediate phenomenon of consciousness which is necessary for a certain line of development.

The manifestation of a Divine conscious Being through a slow and difficult process of evolution is the ultimate goal of creation, and egoistic ignorance; death, suffering and all the evils of existence are only temporary and intermediate events in the process of evolution and they are destined to be exceeded. It is through evolution that Life and mind have emerged out of a dark inconscience and there seems to be no reason why the process of evolution should stop with the emergence of the self-conscious human mind. Just as animal life was only a prelude to the human so is this egoistic life only a prelude to his supreme self-fulfilment, that is to say, the manifestation of the Divine in this mental-vital-physical formation. Evil and suffering and all the poignant experiences of man are the conditions of his further upliftment, the price he has to pay for his glorious divine destiny.

Hence it is not by the dissolution of the individual that freedom from evil and sufferings has to be obtained but by a transformation of the limited ego into a conscious centre of Divine unity and freedom which seems to be the ultimate goal of creation. The Many have emerged out of the One not with a view to be steeped in perpetual ignorance and sufferings but with the ultimate destiny of being transformed into so many conscious centres of divine Unity and freedom with their ignorance and suffering replaced by knowledge and the infinite delight of Being.

This is the ultimate destiny of man for which Nature is in travail.

CHAPTER VIII

THE METHODS OF VEDANTIC KNOWLEDGE

If it is accepted that Sachchidananda is the Truth behind the phenomenal existence and that this Supreme Truth, the One, will realise Itself in the Many by a complete transformation of the limited ego, it becomes necessary to find out and understand the nature and trend of the Divine working and the methods by which we may arrive at the knowledge of the Divine Existence.

Man is a rational animal, and indeed it is Reason, a distinctive faculty in the human mind, which gives man all the advantages over the lower animals; reason is the most important cause of man's superiority over terrestrial beings. Out of the data brought in by the senses the reason builds up what is said to be intellectual knowledge. It corrects the errors of the sense mind, interprets the value and meaning of sensations and thereby constructs a knowledge of the phenomenal world. But it is separative knowledge as it is based on the difference and distinction between one thing and another; it is also indirect, because reason is dependent upon the evidence of the senses in arriving at this knowledge. This kind of knowledge, therefore, concerns itself only with the appearances of things, those that are seizable by the sense organs—it only knows what *appears* to be. It cannot know the truth

behind appearances just because it does not come within the purview of sense experience. This action of the human reason is called dependent action, because, it is dependent on the data supplied by the sense organs.

Reason has also a pure or sovereign action when it is not dependent upon sense experience, goes behind it and arrives at a sort of knowledge based on direct judgment. This direct judgment by the reason may accept some of the sense data or it may reject them altogether and may even be contrary to the sense experience. That is to say, the judgment may be just the opposite or contrary to what the senses would have it accept or believe. To cite an instance from life: a man not at all kindly disposed towards me may yet put on a suave and benevolent look and talk and behave in a manner which is irreproachable. In short, by all outward appearances he may look like one of my sincere well-wishers. But reason may suddenly reject the look of things and arrive at a direct judgment about the real intention of the person in spite of appearances to the contrary. Pure reason has, in its own manner an uncanny power of directly knowing the truth behind appearances. In this way the complete use of pure reason may lead to metaphysical knowledge, the knowledge of the Truth behind the phenomenal world.

'Manas' is said to be the sixth sense; but it may be added that Manas is the only sense, for, our sense experience would have no meaning unless its data were understood, interpreted or translated into the terms of

the sense mind. For instance, in our contact with the external world our body or a portion of our body touches or comes upon some other material body and we have a tactuo-muscular sensation; this sensation is interpreted by the Manas and out of it it builds up the knowledge of the existence of other bodies in space, their distance from us, and so on. In this way through our senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, data are received and interpreted by the Manas in building up a coherent knowledge of the external world. Like Reason, Mind is also capable in man of a double action, namely, mixed or dependent and pure or sovereign. It is the dependent action of the mind that builds up our knowledge of the external world, as, in this respect, it depends entirely on the evidence of the senses.

Mind is said to have its pure action, as distinct from dependent action, when it becomes directly aware of things by a sort of identity with them. For instance, mind is directly aware of our essential existence, of its own states and processes. I become directly aware of whatever passes in my mind by practically identifying myself with it. For instance, I become angry and I know it by identifying myself with that state. Similarly we come to know all the other states of our mind by direct awareness and our knowledge of them is said to be knowledge by identity.

In point of fact all experience is, in its secret nature, knowledge by identity, but the ego has made a distinction between the subject and the object, ourselves as the sub-

ject and an objective world, different from and imposed upon us, as the object. It has through the course of evolution developed organs and processes to come into contact with the objective world which had been excluded and separated from us by the ignorance of the ego. The ego has to take the help of some physiological functions only to have an indirect knowledge of the world. Thus a sort of partial incapacity has been cast upon the mind, and what we call the waking mind or the surface consciousness hides behind it the true or subliminal mind and thereby temporarily shuts out and restricts its power of direct and intimate awareness of Truth behind appearances. Thus the manner of depending on sense experience and constructing an indirect and incomplete knowledge out of it is only due to the regularity of a dominant habit, and this state of things is not indispensable. It therefore follows that it is possible for mind to apply its pure and sovereign action to objects of sense by removing the lid of ignorance that covers its luminous depths; that is to say, by sending the surface consciousness, the waking mind, into a state of sleep and thereby liberating the true or subliminal mind, which has a power of direct awareness of truth behind appearances. This happens when in a state of hypnosis, the surface or waking mind is sent to sleep and the subliminal mind is liberated to apply its sovereign or pure action to all that may be brought before it. This is also possible in a waking state when a man has made some progress in the path of yoga and then he becomes directly aware of

objects and events, near or distant, without the instrumentation of the senses.

It is possible then to apply the sovereign action of Manas in a manner that will give us a direct knowledge of the contents of any object with which it comes into relation. One may by this process be directly aware of the states and processes of the mind of others without relying upon their utterances, gestures or other outward expressions thereof.

By an extension of the knowledge by identity we become aware of our own existence. Knowledge by identity, of the continent necessarily includes the knowledge of its contents. It is by direct self-awareness that we become aware of the contents of our consciousness and if we can extend this faculty of self-awareness to awareness of the self beyond and outside us—the Atman or Brahman of the Upanishads—we may be aware of the Truths that form the contents of Atman or Brahman in the universe. Thus Indian Vedanta sought a knowledge of the universe by a direct knowledge by identity of the Self which contains the universe—the knowledge of the continent gives the knowledge of the contents.

It would now be patent from the above analysis that indirect and separative knowledge woven out of the unsatisfactory data of the senses is not capable of giving us the knowledge of Brahman or of the Infinite. It is only an extension of the self-awareness in the mind to our own self and to other selves, in fact to cosmos, when it gradually exalts itself into luminous self-manifest identity

and Reason gives place to self-luminous intuitional knowledge that will give it the right of entry into the domain and splendour of the Truths beyond.

Ancient Vedanta seized the messages of Intuition and built upon them its conclusions. Intuition is said to be our first teacher, it does not concern itself with the contradictions of Reason or the denials of experience. It brings the messages directly from the Unknown and builds man's knowledge of the Supra-mundane. Intuition tells us of the Existent and not so much of Existence, and it was Intuition that received the messages from the Beyond and enabled the ancient Vedantins to make the world-renowned declarations of the Upanishads, namely, 'I am He, Thou art That O Swetaketu, All this is Brahman, this Self is the Brahman' (*Aham Brahmasmi, Tattvamasi Swetaketu, Sarvamhyetad Brahma, Ayamatma Brahma*).

But intuition cannot give us an idea of the Truth in a clear and articulate form as our nature demands. Our surface consciousness has to be completely changed before intuition becomes the only instrument of knowledge and direct knowledge by identity, as described above, takes the place of intellectual knowledge. It is reason which organises our sense experience and perceptions in a manner readily acceptable to the surface-consciousness and builds up what is known as rational knowledge. This is why inspired scriptures had to make room for metaphysical philosophy with pure reason as the recognised instrument of such knowledge. It was with the help of pure reason that the system of metaphysical philo-

sophy was gradually built up and eventually it was the mixed or dependent action of reason that brought in the age of experimental science. In building up a system of scientific knowledge it was the mixed action of reason that supplanted the action of pure reason and it was built up entirely on materials brought in by the senses and on such legitimate inferences that could be drawn from them.

Thus to the sages of the Veda and Vedanta it was Intuition and spiritual experience alone that revealed the Truth. Logical or intellectual reasoning had nothing to do with the realisation of the Truth—nor could it be the judge of the truth or otherwise of the messages brought in by Intuition. Hence in the Upanishads reliance is never placed on logical discussions, but, intuition was sought to be corrected by a more perfect intuition, spiritual experience by a greater and more luminous experience. Indeed so great was the veneration for Intuition that even in the age of rationalistic speculation, Sruti, the result of inspired revelation, was accepted as an authority superior to reason; so that those conclusions arrived at by rational thinking which militated against or contradicted the revealed scriptures were rejected, and only those were accepted that were in consonance with and supported by the Supreme authority.

But as the years rolled on, speculative reasoning gradually came to establish its undisputed sway over human thinking and the mode of acquiring knowledge—the age of inspired revelation gradually yielded place to the age

of reasoning and intellectuality; this attitude gave rise to various conflicting schools of thought, each swearing by the Vedas, each accepting the Vedas, at least ostensibly, as the basis of its thought and yet arriving at diametrically opposite conclusions.

Intuition received an integral, an indivisible view of the whole Truth; its tendency was for an immediate synthesis and unity of knowledge; whereas Reason proceeds by analysis and synthesis to arrive at knowledge, and in its attempt to synthetise, to build up knowledge by the 'facts' of experience it comes across various conflicting view points and incompatible opposites, some of which it negates or affirms according to its need to build up a flawlessly logical system. And during this process the unity of intuitional knowledge is broken up and a system of rational knowledge constructed out of the materials collected by reason, and any conflict that arose with any inconvenient text of the scriptures was sought to be smoothed over by the ingenuity of the logician.

In spite of the aforesaid trend of human thought and reasoning, the fundamental conceptions of earlier Vedanta survived in most of the philosophical systems, and, Purusha, Atman or Sad Brahman, the pure Existent of the Upanishads, were accepted in some form as the Reality behind appearances, as the Absolute, in itself unknowable but the source of all that has become, the source and impulsion of this stupendous Lila of creation.

CHAPTER IX

THE PURE EXISTENT

CONVINCED of the truth of the messages received by the ancient sages of the Vedas through intuition and spiritual experiences, that Absolute Unity is at the basis of all diversities, Sachchidananda is the source and inspiration of all that has become, and that the human ego is an instrument of ignorance and a distorted reflection of the divine consciousness, the thought of India has always been occupied with questions about the relation of the Absolute Unity with this world and how the ego will exceed its present ignorance and return to its true self or divinity.

Before proceeding to deal with the above questions, let us pause for a moment and look at the world round us with dispassionate eyes. What do we see? We find a vast movement going on in infinite space, as if the play of an infinite energy is pouring itself out through eternal time; we find an existence much vaster than our individual ego or individual human being. We immediately flatter ourselves into the belief that this mighty movement in this wondrous world is meant solely for our benefit or harm; in fact, we believe that its chief concern is to pander to the emotions, to the weal or woe of this little ego and nothing else. As soon as we come to realise that the burden of this gigantic movement is something other

than ministering to the needs of the tiny mortals, that it has other tasks to perform, we are stung with a sense of our own pettiness and feel appalled at the enormity of the boundless movement. Movement and movement on all sides, as if the eternal Car of Juggernath is rolling on in infinite space through eternal time in complete unconcern of whatever may happen to such pettiness as ourselves.

Both the above estimates of the Movement and of the Ego are wrong. They are due to an illusion of quantity or quality to which we are subject. We are appalled by the gigantic movement of the solar system and look upon it with awe and respect and on ourselves as insignificant; or we look at force of quality and consider man as greater than all inanimate nature, taken together. This is the intellectual way of looking at and judging things. It is not with the help of intellectual concepts that we shall be able to realise the true import of things. We have to search for the truth behind the phenomenal existence and through intuition leading to a knowledge by identity that we shall realise that Brahman is the all-pervading Truth behind appearances; that Brahman, the All, is equally and indivisibly present in all that has become, from the solar system right down to the ant-hill. To Brahman, there is no whole or part, there is none more important none less, each and every bit of Creation is equally benefited by the whole of Brahman. Brahman is there in Negation and in Affirmation, in Silence as much as in the Word. It is the judgment from outward

appearances that mislead the mind to form wrong estimates and fix wrong values of men and things.

Thus at present we keep a false account of the relation between the Movement and ourselves; we have to find out the proper relationship, first. We are in the habit of imagining that we are not only important to ourselves but also to Brahman whose chief concern should be ministering to our needs. In our ignorance, we love to think that we are the centre round which the world turns. If we are ill, God must cure us, if we are down in life, God should give us a helping hand to rise, if we are ever in a rut the All should put us on our feet. But on our part we seem to owe no permanent fealty to the Divine, no more than what is necessary to help us get rid of our troubles. We are not disposed to seek the Divine for His sake; we seek the Divine just to assist us get on in life and see us through the dangers and difficulties that are our portion in life. This ego-centric outlook of life found vent in various forms of materialistic philosophy and in some forms of subjective idealism. According to the latter school of thought, the world exists in and by the consciousness of man, the truth or falsity of a thing should be measured according to the standards of human understanding!

Sri Aurobindo is of opinion that there may be an element of truth behind some of the pretensions of the human intellect, but that, Truth lies hidden from intellectual conceptions and It does not reveal Itself until the ego exceeds its ignorance. It is not until, by a supreme act of

self-discovery, the individual realises his importance and becomes aware of his divine destiny that he may be said to have seen the Light that will ultimately lead him to his goal. It is then and then only that a proper reckoning may be made between the One and the Many, when the One will be as important to the Many as the latter to the former.

Now we have to find out the true nature of this infinite and eternal movement. It has been asserted in the Vedanta that the movement is an aspect of a great Timeless Space-less Stability, not Energy but a Pure Existence. But some persons who see only this world-energy, which is only one aspect of the whole reality, declares that all is movement, stability is a fiction and even what appears to be stationary is a block of movement. Even some of the neo-physicists declare that what appears to be solid Matter is composed of millions and millions of tiny particles in a state of constant movement, infinitesimal waves.

Is there then nothing stable, behind, to support this movement? Or is it not a fact that energy is but an output of Existence?

If there is such an Existence it must be infinite like the energy we see round us manifesting itself in various ways. It has to be conceded that the very conception of movement carries with it a potentiality of repose and thereby betrays itself as the activity of some existence which was in repose before the movement started or which will be in repose hereafter. If it is conceded that the energy which is in action *now* has the potentiality of repose,

that the energy may cease to be in action, then it comes to be an absolute energy not in action, which can indicate nothing else than purely absolute existence. Movement must presuppose something that moves or something that initiates that movement. Otherwise, there would be an indefinable energy in eternal action without any stable base or cause, an eternal phenomenon of Action, of Karma, of Movement, as we have the Nihil of the Buddhists. But pure Reason is not willing to accept this finality as it contradicts its fundamental seeing.

Let us take some concrete illustration. It is not only the Buddhists that adopted the theory of flux as the happiest possible explanation of the world of reality. Some of the eminent psychologists maintain that there is always some kind of activity in the mental consciousness. The various states and processes taken together are said to be Mind which is always active. Mind is said to be always passing through some form of conscious activity, and it is not possible to catch the mind at rest, doing nothing, thinking of nothing, as a pure conscious entity. This may indeed be the experience of everyone who attempts to take the surface view of the mind which is really a stream of mental states and processes. It is only by stepping back, by a complete detachment from the surface self that we come upon the silent mind behind the outward states and processes. The silent mind is not at all involved in the outward formations which are its modes and which well out of it. This silent self is the truth behind the surface consciousness.

The purest form of insight into terrestrial existence gives us movement and movement only, a movement in space, a movement in time, —‘a present that always eludes us, because it is not, for it has perished before it is born’.¹ No intellectual concepts will be able to give us any glimpse of the Truth, if any, behind this phenomenon of movement. And it is only in a supreme experience, in a supreme intuition that we can go behind appearances, this change, this succession and come upon the stability behind this movement; It is the pure existence that is not at all involved in this movement but is its support and inspiration.

Hence, the pure Existent behind the movement is a fundamental Reality, as much as the movement or becoming before us. The Being and the Becoming, the stability and the world movement, are the two aspects of the Reality which transcends them both. It is the Absolute which is beyond the movement and the stability, just as it is beyond the unity and the multiplicity.

We have thus seen and understood what pure Reason, intuition or some supreme spiritual experience tells us of the ‘Sat’, the pure Existent. Now we have to find out what is the nature of the ‘Shakti’ or the energy or Force that is conducting the world movement. Is that an unintelligent or blind force of the materialists or a creative Will that is the impulsion behind this Becoming? Or to put it in Vedantic language, is the Force simply a

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter IX, p. 93

movement of action and process or a Chit-Shakti, a Conscious-Force creative of the Universe? Is it a Truth-Consciousness?

We shall now pass on to the next chapter for the answer. Upon a proper solution of this problem depends the meaning of the static and dynamic aspects of the Supreme Reality.

CHAPTER X

CONSCIOUS FORCE

It is a force, a movement of Energy that has assumed material forms more or less gross, or subtle, and Matter is a Form of the presentation of force. The process by which the Original Power or Force built up all forms of Matter is as follows.

According to Indian physicists the original form of this Force was only a condition of pure material extension of which the only property was vibration (*Viyom*). But vibration alone could not create forms, unless there was some contact, some obstruction in the free flow of the original force (*Marut*). Thus material Force was said to have acquired another aspect of which the special property was 'Contact', between force and force. Thereafter a third modification of the said force became necessary and was assumed. It found expression in what we know as Light, Electricity, Fire and Heat (*Tejas*) this is said to be the sustaining principle of Force. Thereafter a fourth and a fifth modification were assumed, namely, Water (*Ap*) and Earth (*Kshiti*) that are characterised by Diffusion and Cohesion respectively. Thus all forms of Matter are said to have been built up by the combination of these Five elements, and all our sensible experiences are said to depend upon the said five elements, thus,

(1) reception of vibration gives the sense of Sound, (2) contact between one material object and another gives the sense of Touch, (3) the action of Light gives the sense of Sight, (4) the action of Water gives the sense of Taste, and (5) Earth gives the sense of Smell. In point of fact, all these sensations are the results of reaction to contacts between Force and Force. This is how, according to the ancient thinkers Pure Force put on certain modifications and built up and gave Form and sequence to this world of Matter.

But the above description of the formative movement of Force does not explain how contact between one material object and another, or the contact of the vibrations of Force can give rise to consciousness. Indeed the mystery of the emergence of consciousness from what was supposed to be inconscient Matter had been the headache of many a materialistic philosopher. If the Original Force is not essentially conscious then no amount of action and reaction between material forces could kindle the spark of consciousness anywhere. The Sankhyas bring in two more elements namely, Mahat and Ahankar. But these elements 'assume the hue of consciousness' only by their proximity to an inactive conscious soul or souls in which their activities are reflected. Besides the above explanation, various attempts have been made by modern materialistic schools of thought to explain consciousness as an emergent condition of Matter at a certain stage of its complexity.

Whatever divergence of opinion there may be between

the various schools of thoughts, ancient and modern, about the origin of consciousness, it is generally conceded that it is a Force—all sensations and actions are the responses of some form of force to the contacts of other forms of force. Thus ultimately the latest analysis of Matter by modern science dispels almost the last trace of doubt about the fact that Movement of Force is the essential nature of the cosmos.

Having conceded that movement of Force or Energy is the whole or the essential nature of the cosmos, the question immediately arises, how and by what mysterious impulsion this formative movement of Force began. It is said that force is inherent in existence though it may be at rest or in movement. Even when apparently at rest, the force is there conserved in the Being. It is eternal in, and is the very nature of, Existence—it may be in manifestation or non-manifestation. It is not something foreign to Existence and imposed upon it from without at a certain point of time. This view of Force or movement is accepted by almost all the important schools of thought in India.

Thus Force being inherent in existence it may be in an alternative state of equilibrium and disturbance of equilibrium as the Sankhya conceives it to be; or it may be in a state of concentration in immutable existence with a superficial play of movement. For instance the calmness of the innermost depths of the ocean is *co-existent* with the constant ebullition on the surface. In short, the movement is either eternal in recurrence, according

to the Sankhya or eternal in continuity like the ocean and its waves. In any event the question of 'how this movement arose' does not arise.

Next, the question of the 'How' of the movement having been disposed of, the further question presents itself, namely, 'Why should Force be in such a state of alternating rhythm of rest and movement as the case may be. What is the rationale of this movement? What is the goal towards which it is heading?' These will be pertinent questions only if we assume Force to be conscious. For, if we assume that both Existence and Force are inert matter, unconscious, there cannot arise any question of scheme, intention or purpose either in the movement or in its impulsion. We do not ask the raging river why it overflows its banks or the tumultuous wind wherefore it blows so hard and brings in such wanton destruction. This question can arise only if we suppose Existence to be Conscious Being and in that case we may enquire what is the reason, plan or purpose of the cosmic movement.

The question of the 'why' of the movement may be answered in this way, namely, Existence may have no option, no say in the matter at all as to whether Force shall manifest in the universe or not. According to this conception Existence is subject to its nature of Force and as such Force seems to be more powerful than its holder, Existence. Force is the master and manifests itself in spite of its continent. But this is not the conception of the Supreme Infinite Existence we are discussing here. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "A Brahman compelled by

Prakriti is not Brahman, but an inert Infinite with an active content in it more powerful than the continent, a conscious holder of Force of whom his Force is Master".¹ It ought to be supposed that the Infinite and Absolute Existence has its eternal potentiality of movement and is not determined by its formations, in other words, It has an inherent freedom of manifestation or non-manifestation.

We have now to understand the relation between this Force or movement and consciousness. By consciousness we ordinarily mean our waking mental awareness. We are not said to be conscious even when we fall asleep or fall into a swoon, for any reason whatsoever, and cannot react to physical stimuli. But we shall have to outgrow this shallow idea of consciousness with a view to appreciate its proper extent and nature.

This surface or superficial state of consciousness, which we know exclusively to be our mental consciousness, is only a fringe or a narrow strip of our entire conscious Being. Below the surface consciousness there is a much vaster region of consciousness, the subliminal mind, which is capable of attaining to heights which are far beyond the capacity of the waking mind. Besides, the waking state is not even the whole of the mental consciousness, for, there is the sub-conscious mind which is almost the same and is a part of the surface mind but it acts just behind the surface, unknown to the surface mind,

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter X, p. 190.

and it has a slightly larger scope of awareness. Of course, the subliminal mind is a much more illumined state of consciousness than the sub-conscious mind, its capacities far exceed those of the sub-conscious mind. The very common experience of persons intelligently answering questions while in a state of hypnosis when the surface consciousness is sent to sleep should testify to the fact that there is something or somebody awake or conscious even when the surface consciousness is asleep or when we are said to be unconscious. Hence this much at least is established that the range of consciousness is not co-extensive with the waking mind, as it has been mistakenly believed till recently. We shall proceed to examine the scope and extent of consciousness after we have discussed some other views about the nature of consciousness.

The old schools of materialism contended that consciousness is only a material phenomenon. It evolved at a certain stage of evolution out of the physical organs that first formed themselves in the process of material evolution. It is said to be an emergent condition of matter at a certain stage of its complexity and it is inseparable from the material organs which are said to produce it. But this was too ignorant a conception of the nature of consciousness to stand the test of rational enquiry and with the gradual advance of knowledge it has become completely untenable.

Consciousness is the fundamental or essential fact of existence, and instead of the physical organs producing

or using consciousness, as it had been wrongly supposed, it is the formative movement of consciousness that has given Form and colour to the phenomenal world. It is consciousness that uses the brain, the human body, for certain expressions. It has been found in abnormal cases that even the organs are not indispensable instruments of expression of consciousness or thought which can be communicated from one person to another without spoken words; thoughts can be transmitted from one centre of consciousness to another without the instrumentation of the physical organs which were once supposed to be indispensable.

Let us now try to understand the range of consciousness. We have seen that when we are asleep, stunned or drugged there is something in us that is awake, and in that state consciousness is not suspended but it is gathered inward, below the surface, and does not respond to the impact of external things. Besides the above there are forms of consciousness in us and in the world which are not mental consciousness, the only state with which we are familiar; they are sub-mental consciousness. For instance, there is a form of consciousness in the cells of our bodies which enable the bodies to go through certain movements correctly, respond to attractions and repulsions, and these activities go on as if automatically without ever coming up to the level of mental awareness. In the lower animals too the form of consciousness which is called vital consciousness, leads the animals more or less safely through all the activities of life and enable them to

survive the struggle for existence. Further below, in the plants too, a sort of consciousness is evident in the various reactions of the plants to external stimuli, in its reactions of pleasure and pain, so to say, but this is also sub-mental, nay, sub-animal consciousness although its fundamental reactions are exactly similar to those of mental consciousness.

Does consciousness cry a halt at the level of the plants or extends in some form or other further below the plant world? If we suppose that consciousness does not extend any further than the plant world, we shall have to imagine that consciousness is a foreign commodity imported from some other world or planet and introduced into the terrestrial creation at a particular stage of its progress. Or, unable to account for the appearance of Life and Mind in Matter we may exclaim like an illustrious philosopher, thus, "Perhaps God breathed the breath of Life into the minutest protoplasmic cells".

In fact nothing can evolve out of Matter unless it were involved in it in some form or other, at least in some embryonic state. The tiny seed contains in it all the potentialities of the tree that grows out of it. And there is no reason to suppose that consciousness stops short of what we call the purely material world. Accustomed to identify consciousness with the waking mental state, it is very hard for us to believe that there can be inert or suppressed consciousness in the metal or in the earth, difficult to realise that consciousness is the inherent reality behind the trance-like sleep of Matter. But this

is too rigid and ignorant a conception to stand the scrutiny of intelligent observation and experiment. "Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit", from nothing, nothing comes, and unless consciousness were there involved in Matter from the very inception of this material world, it could not have gradually emerged during the process of evolution. Further, there is no compelling reason to suppose that there is a sudden break of Unity at a particular stage and consciousness extends no further than the plant world.

In the light of the above analysis our view of consciousness should undergo a radical change and the term consciousness assume a different meaning and significance. It is not to be conceived as synonymous with mentality. It is a self-aware force of existence which extends down into the vital and material movements and ascends up to the Superconscient and between these two poles our human mentality is only a middle term.

We have now to consider one more question in relation to this subject. Granting that there is a movement or Force or a formative movement of World Force, how are we justified in believing that this force is conscious and not a blind force? Consciousness presupposes some intelligence, however embryonic or however different it may be from human intelligence. Is there then any evidence of intelligence, a purposefulness in all the orders of the phenomenal world which would justify us in believing that this world-Force is a conscious-force? Indeed there is ample indication in that direction in the phenomenal world.

We are struck with genuine admiration to see the work of intelligence even in the minutest movements of the animal world, among the birds, the beasts and the tiniest of insects; their movements indicate a purposefulness, a scientific knowledge which can even do honour to human intelligence. They carry on their day to day activities, as if guided by some conscious-force from behind, and it seems that some super-intelligence has taken possession of them and driving them towards their objectives with an unerring purposefulness. Innumerable instances can be cited from the lower animal world too to show the working of a set purpose behind all their activities. In what we call inanimate nature, too, there are signs of the working of a supreme hidden intelligence.

It has been contended against this conception of conscious-force that Nature is wasteful. If intelligence is at work behind all movements why should Nature, instead of going straight to her goal, adopt a method which indicates a good deal of waste; why should the law of Natural Selection work in a manner which is so roundabout and involve so much waste and destruction of useful materials? All these are misconceptions born out of the limitations of the human intellect. We impose our rational estimate of things, which may be good enough for human ends, upon the working of the world-force. We are judging Nature from insufficient materials; we see what is happening only on the surface, completely ignorant of the real purpose, the Truth behind the world movement.

This Force is no other than the Chit-Shakti of the Indian conception. A supreme intelligence lies imprisoned behind phenomenal appearances, animate or inanimate, and a gradual Release of that which imprisoned itself seems to be the sole object of this movement. There is a gradual emergence of consciousness which was involved behind the apparent inconscience of Nature and we see its throb in the lower forms below Mind and in the human being it flowers out as Intellectuality; but the journey back is only half done—it has to proceed much further, rise to superior heights, so that it can completely extricate itself from its self-imprisonment and the Conscious Being may manifest itself in the world of names and forms. This is the key to the conundrum.

CHAPTER XI

DELIGHT OF EXISTENCE: THE PROBLEM

WE have then accepted that Brahman is the Truth behind the phenomenal world and It is Brahman that is manifesting Himself through this process of creation. It is the conscious-Force of Brahman, Chit-Shakti, that is forming this World. Brahman is the Absolute, needing nothing, desiring nothing, and in the Being of Brahman there is no deficiency of any kind. This Absolute has indeed the potentiality of creating names and forms, and infinite potentialities of manifestation in various ways. Yet, the Absolute is not compelled by its nature of Force to create this world; the Absolute is not compelled to manifest any of its potentialities. Why then should Brahman create at all? What may be the purpose of this creation?

Brahman is absolutely free but He is not even bound by His own freedom not to create. Brahman is Sachchidananda, the very term of whose existence is Bliss, and, Delight can be the only reason of this creation. The Force of consciousness of Brahman, as the formative principle, can throw itself out in infinite varieties of forms and the self-delight of Brahman revels in the infinite mutations of Itself in the numberless teeming universes

—this is the object of this extensive creative movement. It is Sachchidananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss—that is throwing Itself out in this infinite variations of names and forms and endlessly enjoying the delight of this variation. Whatever exists in this world, exists as terms of this conscious force, terms of the self-delight of Being. It is Chit-Shakti that is inherent in this phenomenal World it has created and it is the self-delight of Being that sustains it. It is Ananda out of which this world is born, it is Ananda that sustains it and it is Ananda that is its goal and consummation. This is the ancient Vedantic theory of the origin of cosmos.

We are immediately faced with a contradiction which well nigh seems to be insoluble. If the world is an expression of the Infinite delight of Being, if Ananda is the Truth that sustains all appearances, how are we to account for pain and Evil in this world? Sensational consciousness of pain and the ethical problem of evil seem to strike at the very root of the assumption that, out of Delight has sprung this cosmic existence. Instead of being a delightful existence, our lives seem to be beset with pain and suffering that assail us at every step. This is a baffling problem which has exercised the human brain since the dawn of human understanding. Various solutions had been offered and rejected as unsatisfactory and at long last a large section of humanity seems to have sullenly resigned itself to the prevailing state of things as indissolubly bound up with life on earth. Sri Aurobindo has dealt with this question in two chapters. In this

chapter he has lucidly stated the problem and in the next, given the solution.

Hence before proceeding further let the whole question be examined dispassionately. Is it indeed the truth that life is *Full* of suffering and evil, or, an over-emphasis is laid on the passing distempers of life? If we stop to look round us or look back into the past experiences of our own lives, we shall realise that pleasure of existence is the normal state of things and pain a contrary or abnormal occurrence. And it is exactly for this reason that pain affects us so intensely, and, evil is experienced as an outrage on our existence. Life is normally pleasant and that is why we get so much disturbed when there is the slightest departure from the normal state of things. We do take note of the fact that after all the sum of the pleasures of existence far exceeds the sum of pain and sufferings. When a perfectly healthy person gets a toothache he feels and even complains that his whole body is going to pieces, ignoring for the time being the fact that all his other limbs are quite hale and hearty and it is just a throb of pain in a very small portion of his body that is upsetting him so much—and all this, because it is usual and normal for the human body to be hale and hearty. This is exactly the background against which our sense of suffering appears so poignant.

Assuming that pain and evil form only a small portion of our worldly experiences, the difficulty still remains, namely, how can pain and evil, however slight, come out

of the Self-Delight of Being which is the Truth behind all appearances?

Various theories sought to explain the possibility of pain and evil in this world, but most of them explained nothing, nay, led to greater confusion. If, for instance, we say that pain and evil are trials set to mortals, we solve nothing; rather we conceive of a God not of Good and Love whom we can worship but a God of Might whom we must propitiate so that we may be able to escape the pain and evil that seems to be around. Besides, 'Trials' and 'Tests' are terms that are not applicable to an Omniscient God. 'Test' presupposes an element of ignorance as to the result of the 'Test'. The scientist makes all sorts of 'tests' with a view to find out the results of those tests of which he is ignorant. It is by tests or experiments that we try to find out many truths of which we are ignorant. But no such disability attaches to an Omniscient God who knows from the beginning what would be the result of the tests to which He puts frail human beings. It would be thus an act of sheer cruelty on the part of the benevolent Creator if He puts us to tests and ordeals. Besides, we explain nothing by asserting that pain is a consequence and punishment of moral evil. For, who created moral evil? The inexorable Law of Karma puts in the shade and is irreconcilable with a Supreme Personal God. It is therefore patent that no view of an extra-cosmic moral God can explain, evil, pain and suffering—Himself remaining unaffected He creates a world of living beings condemned by the inexorable Law of Karma to lives of

pain, evil and suffering. No, this is neither an exalted conception of God nor a solution of the problem.

This is not the Vedantic conception of Sachchidananda. He is the One without a second and it is He who has embodied Himself in His creatures, and, if there is pain and suffering in this world it is no other than Sachchidananda who is undergoing them. In the light of this Truth revealed in the Vedanta, the problem puts on a completely different hue. It may now be asked: 'How can pain and evil exist in Sachchidananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss—which is its positive negation? How can the Delight of Existence admit into itself evil and suffering? How could negation of delight spring from delight?

Let us examine the nature of ethical or moral evil first. Condemnation or approval is the basis of Ethics, but we do not live in an ethical world. For instance, material nature is not ethical; animal or vital nature is also non-ethical. We do not condemn the storm for the devastation it creates nor do we blame the tiger for killing and devouring its innocent prey. It is only at a higher level, namely, the level of human beings, that the sense of ethics has evolved. Thus, material and vital nature is non-ethical and Infra-ethical, human nature is ethical, and at a still higher level again it is supra-ethical. Ethics, then, covers only a small part of the journey. In the non-ethical and infra-ethical stages Nature destroys or builds impartially and it is the secret Will behind it that creates or kills according to the Truth of Being.

Man seeks self-expression, self-development; in short, the conscious force in him struggles for expression, and whatever helps that expression is said to be good and whatever retards it is said to be evil, whatever ennobles humanity is termed good, and whatever hurts him or lowers him is termed evil. To us Ethics has thus evolved from an emotional recoil from or dislike of that which displeases or hurts us and prevents our self-expression. Man has to live, exist, so that he should have an opportunity of progress, of self-expression, and hence from the very beginning man liked and became attracted to that which helped him to live, to progress, and disliked that which threatened to hurt or injure him. And gradually during the course of human progress this feeling of attraction or recoil refined itself into the feeling of approval or disapproval, which is indeed the origin of the sense of ethical values. The ethical impulse is the means by which man struggles out of the lower harmony into a higher harmony and universality, when he is no longer in need of any ethical code, for, at that stage, which is said to be supra-ethical, all the problems of harmony dissolve and disappear into a final reconciliation. Ethics, then, is a stage in evolution, one among the three layers, namely, Infra-ethical, Ethical and Supra-ethical. It is the urge of the Divine for self-expression that is common to all the stages, inconscient or conscient, material, vital or mental.

The Conscious-Force of existence (which has been discussed in a previous chapter) in shaping this pheno-

menal world, seeks new and new forms of itself and in the passage from the lower to the higher forms there intervenes at a certain stage the phenomenon of pain and suffering which seem to be the negation, the very contradiction of the fundamental nature of its being which is said to be Delight. This is the problem which demands a solution. How do we explain this contradiction, namely, pain and suffering in the bosom of universal delight of existence?

In our pragmatic consciousness delight of existence is almost completely shrouded in a thick veil woven out of our desires and their inevitable fruits, pleasure and pain, and covered up with all sorts of poisonous weeds which have to be burned up completely with the Fire of divine effulgence. And it will be then and only then that human life will cease to swing between its fleeting experiences of pleasure and pain, when mortal pleasure will be replaced by the Immortal's ecstasy.

CHAPTER XII

DELIGHT OF EXISTENCE: THE SOLUTION

DELIGHT is indeed the inherent secret of creation; it is delight for which things remain in existence, and it is delight again which is the goal of creation. Behind this surface consciousness there is a vast range of consciousness which is our essential being of real self which tastes the delight of all mundane experiences through this external self which is only a trembling ray on the surface compared to the vast subliminal behind it. The surface consciousness, with which alone we are familiar, is just a narrow strip behind which stretches a vast conscious region of which this surface is not normally aware. This secret or true self takes nothing but delight in all the experiences of the surface mind, pleasant, painful or natural. This delightful experiences of our true self is the reason and the secret of our clinging to life in spite of all that the surface mind feels as bitter and poignant. This, in short, is the secret of the instinct of self-preservation. We usually identify our mind with the superficial consciousness, but our mind is only the human range of consciousness and there is much above and below this range with which our normal human mind has no contact.

Life and mind have come out of apparently inconscient Matter, through a slow and difficult process of evo-

lution, and, as such, they are even now suffering from some of the incapacities of their material origin. Thus our mind is shrouded in ignorance which keeps veiled from it the real self of which it is only a surface representation. Our mind is a temporary superficial arrangement created with a view to get surface experiences and behind it there is the real self that profits and takes delight in all the contacts of the surface-mind with the external world. The surface-mind, oblivious of the truth that is supporting it, is subject to the triple variation of pleasure, pain or neutral feeling on account of its wrong reaction and imperfect responses to the multiple contacts of this world. The surface-mind is too divided and limited in its working to take an integral view of its world experiences and as a result it feels joys and sorrows, pleasure and pain, whereas the true self takes an impartial delight in all experiences, pleasurable, painful or otherwise.

Ordinarily this truth is hidden from us and it is only at rare moments of illumination that we get a faint glimpse of the Reality behind the surface. If ever we are able to live within ourselves, we shall awaken to our real self which is an eternal portion of the Divine and supports our superficial self. It is only a part—and a superficial part at that—which feels pleasure and pain. There is the *Ānandamaya Purusha* behind the surface-self of which the latter is only a shadowy image.

Besides what has been stated above, the feeling of pleasure or pain is due to two important reasons, namely, the obligation of habit and want of detachment from

mundane hopes and fears. *First*, the feeling of pain, for instance, is due to the habit our nature has formed to return this particular response to particular contacts. There is such a thing as obligation of habit to feel pain under certain circumstances instead of delight. The nervous being in us has become accustomed to a certain fixedness in these reactions as it is enslaved to its habits. Hence the nervous being in us feels that it must grieve at defeats and rejoice at success and any departure from this fixed habit would be to it abnormal.

With regard to physical pleasure and pain also, which is dominated by external contact and pressure, it is on account of a dominant habit of the surface mind that a contact is felt as pleasurable or painful, the subliminal or inner consciousness takes only delight in all these experiences. And if our surface-mind be sent to sleep we become insensible to pain, for the time being, at a contact which would be a torture in our waking state. While in a state of great anger or excitement a man becomes, for the time being, insensible to any wound that may be inflicted on him, because his mind is then completely dominated by anger—his mind *becomes* anger so to speak—and it forgets for a while its habit of feeling pain. The wound becomes painful only after the mind relapses into its normal state when the nerves reassert themselves and remind the mentality of its obligation to feel pain. Similarly, in a state of hypnosis, when the habitual waking consciousness is suspended, the surface-mind can be successfully forbidden to feel pain of a

wound that may be inflicted or an operation that may be performed on the body. These instances indicate that the surface-consciousness has a habit of feeling pain and by an effort of will the mental being can make the body oblivious of the habitual nervous reaction of the body. No contact therefore is *intrinsically* painful or pleasurable; it is only a habit of the surface mind to return a reaction of pain or of pleasure at a particular contact.

Secondly, too much egoistic attachment to mundane things and happenings is the cause of much of the unhappiness that clouds our lives. The more attached we are the more poignant is our suffering and the less attached we are the less is our suffering, and when we can be completely detached in our mind and heart, pain ceases to be painful and tragedy grieves us no more. We enjoy the taste of the *Rasa* of sorrow even in the most poignant episodes. It is the egoistic 'I' that is the cause of so much sorrow and suffering and if we can step back and remove this 'I' from the events of life, pain and evil would cease to be an insoluble problem. The truth of this statement will be evident from the following illustration. Death is indeed a melancholy event and bereavement is painful. If my child dies I would become perhaps disconsolate and the feeling of pain would be too poignant to bear. This is so because I am most intimately attached to my children and this attachment becomes the cause of so much agony. My feeling of pain would be very much less if my neighbour's son dies, because I am much less

attached to him; and to me it would be a neutral feeling if I hear of the death of somebody else living in a distant land. Thus the intensity of painful feeling would vary according to the intensity of my personal attachment to the person concerned. The more detached I am from the event or from the person in question, the less would be my feeling of pain. Next, painful events, tragedies, can even be enjoyable when I am a completely disinterested witness, for instance, when we go to see plays with tragic endings, or listen with rapt attention to the pathetic strains of mournful music. Tears may roll down our cheeks and there may be all the outward signs of physical and mental suffering but, all the same, we heartily enjoy the painful scenes or mournful music. It is said that 'our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts'! Thus it is evident that it is not any particular event or a particular contact that is *intrinsically* pleasurable or painful; it is the presence or absence of egoistic attachment that makes it painful or otherwise.

There is therefore no inevitability in all the pain and suffering of our normal human experience. Besides, physical and mental pain is a device employed by Nature to subserve a particular purpose. In his earthly adventure man has to live and progress in a world full of all sorts of forces, benevolent and malevolent and in his struggle for existence his limited capacity is exposed to various unkind forces and shocks which may wound him, maim him or completely destroy him. Pain is in the nature of a nervous or physical recoil from all harmful contacts.

—it is *Jugupsa*, the shrinking of the limited being from anything not in harmony with himself, anything that may harm him. This is by way of self-defence, so to say, that he shrinks from whatever is painful or causes him suffering. This will continue so long as the mind of man remains steeped in egoistic ignorance and cannot bring itself in harmony with all other beings and the unkind forces of Nature. Once he frees himself from the bondage of egoistic ignorance, no such device will be necessary to protect his limited being.

Jugupsa will gradually have to be substituted by *Titiksha*, that is to say, instead of shrinking or flying away from the unkind shocks of existence, we have to face and endure them; thereafter by facing and enduring the forces of this world we shall gradually develop a sense of indifference to all shocks,—equality or *Samata*—which will enable us to return a neutral response to imperfect and perverse touches of pleasure and pain. This will be the prelude to the ultimate stage when our reaction will be nothing else than that of Ananda to all the blows and buffets of what we supposed to be an unkind world.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DIVINE MAYA

THE poet, the painter or the musician holds in himself the capacity or the faculty of writing poems, painting pictures or singing songs; when he scribbles verses, paints pictures or sings songs, as the case may be, he brings out or manifests what was potential or unmanifested in himself. So also, the thinker, the politician, and others give expression to what was hidden within themselves. As such, poetry, painting, music that comes out of the poet, the painter or the musician, respectively, is nothing but a part of his own being. What was unmanifest in him is manifested. In short, he creates or produces these out of himself and therefore the creation or production is not something intrinsically different from the creator, although we are in the habit of making a distinction between the poet and his poetry, the painter and his painting, and so on. Similarly, Sachchidananda is the ultimate Reality of the universe; whatever has been created has come out of Sachchidananda and is a manifestation of some Truth of His Being. It is Ananda out of which this cosmos has come, it is Ananda that sustains it and to Ananda it shall return. Whatever has come into manifestation seeks nothing but Ananda; in fact this creation is in travail for the manifestation of Ananda

which is the inherent Truth of existence. The human individual, at present steeped in egoistic ignorance, is denied for the time being the taste of this divine Ananda; he has to find out the truth of himself by self-realisation and manifest his real being now lying hidden behind his surface movements. For indeed, the finite is only a mask and an instrument for the gradual expression of the Infinite Delight of Being. It is therefore this divine Ananda that is the eternal quest of the human pilgrim and the emergence of the divine consciousness in the individual is the goal towards which he is proceeding.

It was chaos out of which the cosmos is said to have emerged; it was all darkness and chaos at the very inception of this world and it was out of inconscient Matter that Life and Mind gradually evolved. Matter could not be a *negation* of consciousness, for in that case, consciousness could not come out of it. Consciousness was involved in it and that is why the gradual emergence of consciousness has been possible. That which was involved is gradually evolving. First, there was a complete self-absorption of the Divine consciousness in Matter; secondly, there has been an emergence of Life and of self-conscious Mind, and the last chapter is going to see a complete emergence of that infinite consciousness which was self-absorbed in inconscient Matter. This triple movement then, namely, self-absorption of consciousness in Matter, partial emergence up to Life and Mind and a final emergence of the involved consciousness, is the key to the whole mystery of creation.

Now a question arises which demands a solution: we are told that Sachchidananda is the reality of the universe. We have yet to understand the process by which this Reality converted Itself into the phenomenal world. Moreover, Sachchidananda has infinite potentialities of manifestation. Did the Lord bring out this particular manifestation with a sweep of a magic wand or there is a Law, a process through which this creation has been brought about?

The Infinite has infinite possibilities; it holds involved in itself illimitable truths capable of manifestation in infinite variations. The infinite consciousness perceives a particular truth in itself and directs its force of creation along the line of that truth which is gradually manifested in the universe. It is thus the conscious-force of the Divine that concentrates upon and thereby selects and brings out in manifestation a fixed truth or fixed order of truths and builds a world in conformity with that truth. If there were no such selective action, then, infinite action of the Infinite would have produced infinite results and not this fixed order of truth which has been selected by the selective faculty of the Divine out of the various possibilities involved in the Infinite Consciousness. This faculty of selection and manifestation in the Divine consciousness is termed Maya. A comparison with our normal mental activities will make it clear. A scholar, for instance, is versed in several subjects; he holds in himself, so to speak, the capacity of taking absorbed interest in any book on any subject that he knows. Before he elects to

study any book what he does is this, namely, he first thinks of a particular book out of the many he is capable of reading and then concentrates upon it; in other words, he mentally selects the book he would like to read and then applies himself to its contents. Or, a sculptor, for instance, is capable of making statues of all shapes and patterns; before he actually prepares one, he makes a mental selection of a particular figure to which he would like to give shape and form and then applies his force of action and knowledge to convert his conception to reality. That is to say, he first selects one out of the many he is capable of making and then applies his will and energy to make it a reality.

The aforesaid selective faculty of Knowledge calculated to shape finite things out of the Being of the Infinite, this power of selecting one ordered truth of the Infinite Consciousness out of its infinite possibilities and bring it out to manifestation was known as Maya to the Vedic seers. Maya, then, is the power of Infinite Consciousness to select to form Name and Form out of the vast illimitable truths of Infinite existence.

This Maya has a lower and a higher working. By its lower working it obscures consciousness and thereby creates all the ignorant divisions and limitations, the desires, strifes and sufferings to which human beings seem to be eternally sentenced. All these have to be surpassed; we have to free ourselves from the disfiguring errors and falsehoods and emerge into the Supramental Truth of the Maya.

The illusionist philosophies ignore this distinction between the Higher and Lower working of Maya and thereby miss the link that would reconcile seeming contradictions. To them this mental Maya is the creatrix of the world which then becomes neither an illusion nor a reality—just an inexplicable paradox. They recognise Mind alone as the creator of the worlds and as a result the solution of this mystery of creation swings between subjective idealism and Illusionism—between the opinions, *Prateetimatramevaitad Bhati Visvacharacharam* and *Brahma Satya Jagannithya Jiva Brahmaiva napara*.

Mind is only an intermediate term, an instrument of the descending creation and it is not the creatrix; it is a transitional stage in the ascent and the world is not a figment of mental imagination. It is Divine Maya that selected one out of the infinite potentialities of the Divine consciousness and gave it Name and Form. It is by an act of exclusive self-concentration that the Divine descended into the inconscience of Matter and it is by a slow and difficult process of evolution that the involved consciousness is freeing itself from its self-imprisonment. Mind is not an instrument of knowledge, it is a faculty for seeking knowledge. The constant aspiration in the mental being to exceed itself, the constant seeking to go ever beyond itself is an unmistakable testimony of its divine origin and ultimate divine destiny. It is therefore not Mind that is the creator but the Divine Maya, the Supermind, of which mind is only a distorted reflection. Mind is therefore not sufficient to explain existence in the universe.

It has been suggested that an infinite Mind, free from its present limitations might be the creator of the world? An infinite Mind freed from its bondage of egoistic ignorance and all other disabilities and made omniscient and omnipotent would not be mind, at all, it would be supramental knowledge. But an infinite mind constituted in terms of human mentality would produce only chaos. It would be only an enlarged edition of this present ignorant seeker of knowledge. All its defects and disabilities would be magnified infinitely and the result would be disastrous, not a cosmos with a fixed order of Truths, but a world of conflicting possibilities, uncertain in its drift and eventually leading nowhere.

The world is a divine creation and expresses a foreseen Truth; it obeys a pre-determining Will. The truth of the tree is pre-determined in the seed and the tree only gives unerring expression to the Will contained in the seed. Mind has no such power of prevision, it has no unerring vision of truth that has to be manifested. It can only imagine, make schemes which it has not often the capacity to put into effect. It can make guesses which more often than not prove to be false. All its activities are governed by appearances and it has not the capacity to have any knowledge of the Beyond, the Truth that is gradually unfolding itself through the process of creation. It is only by going behind the surface movements that the mind can discover the Truth, resplendent in all its glory and which the mind failed to see in the faint and uncertain light of its Reason.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPERMIND AS CREATOR

In the last chapter we have seen the initial process by which the Reality converted itself into this phenomenal universe. In this chapter Sri Aurobindo describes the real nature of that active principle of knowledge-Will that is the intermediary power "...between the self-possession of the One and this flux of the Many." It is the Supermind, the creatrix of the world and as such this consciousness is not only a state of knowledge but also a power of knowledge—it is a dynamic and not merely a static power, not only a Knowledge but a Will according to Knowledge. It is not only an awareness of the Truth of the infinite potentialities of Sachchidananda but it is also a Power to select, formulate and manifest one order of truth according to its inherent light and vision. In short, it is the Nature of the Divine Being in its action as the Lord or Creator of its own worlds—Para Prakriti.

There is so much in the working of this Divine Supermind that is radically different from or apparently contradictory to the operation of the human mentality that it is difficult to believe that a true account of the nature and working of this divine principle can be given to the human intellect. But, though a distorted reflection, it is in essence identical with the Supermind. It is a develop-

ment by limitation out of the Supermind and is capable of resolving itself back into that by a reverse development by expansion. The plenary light and effulgence of the Supermind has been gradually veiled, step by step; it became its distorted reflection—Mind—even as such it conceals in itself the potentiality of the Supermind. It is by removing the veils, one after another, that it has the capacity of recovering its full Light and Knowledge, freed from the conflicts and distortions of a partial knowledge.

The Supermind is an intermediate formulation, a link, between the unitarian or indivisible consciousness of Sachchidananda and the dividing consciousness of the Mind. It is indeed the means by which this inferior consciousness has issued out of the superior. In a way, it is the child of that self-awareness by identity, which is the poise of Brahman and also the parent of divisions and distinctions which are the characteristics of the Mind. Above there is the One, eternally stable and immutable, where there is no self-expansion, no sense of distinction even between the Knower, Known and Knowledge—"a state of objectless ecstasy"—and below, the Flux of the Many groping in ignorance and beset with all sorts of divisions and distinctions.

Supermind has the power of development, evolution, making explicit and also the power of envelopment, involution, making implicit. That is to say, Supermind has the power of drawing out of the One one order of truth from Its hidden multitudes and it has also the power of making that truth involved or implicit in Matter. Sri

Aurobindo says, "In a sense, the whole of creation may be said to be a movement between two involutions, Spirit in which all is involved and out of which all evolves downward to the other pole of Matter, Matter in which also all is involved and out of which all evolves upwards to the other pole of Spirit".¹ The Spirit contains involved in Itself infinite possibilities and it is out of these that the Divine Supermind is developing or bringing out one order of truth which becomes gradually involved in Matter; and out of Matter again emerges all the truths of the Spirit that were held imprisoned under its veil of inconscience till they come up to the level of the Spirit.

Let us note some of the essential contrasts between our mentality and the Supermind or Truth-consciousness. It is on divisions and distinctions that our knowledge is based. Besides, our thought is divorced from what we call objective reality. Thoughts somehow occur in the mind, we know not from where, and we are accustomed to regard the thoughts as different from the objects of those thoughts. We form ideas of all sorts which may not correspond to truth and most of them may be unreal-ideas. Next, let us observe the process through which the human mind tries to convert its ideas into realities. First, we form an idea, a plan or a scheme of a particular thing. Thereafter if we are satisfied with the soundness of the plan or scheme we make up our mind to carry it out, or, in other words, we 'will' to convert the scheme or idea

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XIV p. 158

into reality and take necessary steps therefor. In some cases the ideas are only partially realised while in others they fail to materialise at all. Thus in the working of the mind there are so many stages, namely, an idea, thereafter a 'will' to realise the idea and lastly taking proper steps to realise it; and even so, the result is, more often than not, uncertain and unsatisfactory for the necessary means may be lacking.

In the Supermind, on the contrary, the idea is never divorced from Reality, it is always Real-Idea and not mental thought or imagination. The idea is never divorced from Will, as is the case with the human mind. The supramental consciousness, unlike mental consciousness, is a Force; it is not only Chit but Chit-Shakti, and as such, its self-effectuating force immediately converts ideas into reality; the reality of the Idea evolves itself by its own power of consciousness. Knowledge in the supermind is self-awareness and self-Will. It is Knowledge-Will. For instance, the power of illumination in Fire is not divorced from its power of burning. The substance of the fire is identical with the power of burning; wherever there is illumination there is the power of burning; similarly, in the Supermind wherever there is consciousness there is Force and wherever there is Knowledge there is Will.

In the human mind there is always a sense of distinction in all the processes that lead from the formulation of a scheme to its fruition. Thought itself seems to be something different from the thinker, the 'will' is again some

other force which seems to be different from the person 'willing'. Hence I make a distinction between my sense of 'myself' and all the other states and processes of the mind, and our 'will' is not self-effective, there is always a big gulf between our 'will' and its effectuation. In the Supermind the consciousness or awareness of a truth realises itself by its self-effectuating Force, for, unlike the mental, Supramental consciousness is Force.

The above, in short, is a workable conception of the divine and creative Supermind which is the link between the Self-possessed One and the Flux of the Many. As we proceed we shall have occasions to go into more and more details about this creative aspect of the Supreme Divine.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

THE Supermind, then, is the nature of the Divine Being in its poise as the Lord and Creator, the Para Prakriti. It is the Truth-consciousness—*ṛta-cit*—which is involved in each and every thing and is the secret impulsion behind the manifestation of Names and Forms, the harmonies potential in the Infinite consciousness according to a fixed process. It is said to be the source of Law in this world and this Law is only the unfolding of the truth of being. When we say that the tree comes out of the seed according to the law of nature, we explain really nothing, we merely describe a sequence of events. There is indeed a law behind, but that law is the unfolding of the truth of being. For instance, the seed contains in itself the truth of its being, namely, the tree; and impelled by a secret force the seed gradually unfolds the truth of its being as the tree emerges out of the seed. This force or impulsion is no other than the Truth-consciousness or Supermind which reveals or brings out the truth of each and every thing according to a pre-determined idea formed at the very inception of creation.

There is nothing arbitrary here, the tree is pre-determined in the seed and impelled by the pre-determining force the seed only unfolds its inherent truth. Without

such pre-determining idea in the very seed of things, there could not be this manifestation according to a fixed order of truths and creation would have been a chaos. This force or impulsion is not only conscious of the Truth of things that have to be manifested but it is also involved in each and every thing cast out for manifestation and by its self-effectuating force unfolds or reveals their inherent truth.

This principle has been variously described by Sri Aurobindo as, Truth-consciousness, Supermind, Para-Prakriti and so on. This is said to be a selective faculty of Knowledge and its function is to select one order of Truth for manifestation out of the infinite potentialities of Sachchidananda, to concentrate upon that Truth and to gradually bring it out in manifestation according to a pre-determined idea. It is the indwelling Presence of each and every thing that unfolds the truth of them all by its self-effectuating force. This principle, however, is nothing else than a poise of the Divine Being, and it is inseparable from the Being of the Divine just as the power of burning of fire, is inseparable from its power of illumination or from the substance of fire. This Divine Supermind is His Maya which develops the world out of the original concentrated unity of His Being. Out of non-manifestation it brings out in manifestation according to a pre-determined Idea.

This conception of the development of this world according to the Truth of its being, this movement from non-manifestation to manifestation, implies a succession

in Time and a relation in Space. The idea of time and space had to survive criticism from various theories some of which deny their reality. Metaphysics holds that time and space have no real existence, they are only conceptual. They are the manner of thinking and viewing events and objects by the human mind and they have no real existence. Logic mentions time and space as categories of knowledge. Let us now pause and examine the exact import of time and space.

Time is measured by events and space by matter. With us time has three aspects, namely, past, present and future. When we look back into our own lives and try to recollect the various events that have happened in the past, we get an idea of the length of time that has elapsed in which the said events took place—we can thus measure the length of time, so to speak, by the events that happened in it. Time is thus an extension in which movements or events take place, or in other words, a mobile extension; it seems as if time contains or holds events or movements that happened in the past and may happen in the future. Space is similarly measured by the material objects contained in it. The greater the number of objects that it can hold the bigger seems to be a particular area or space. It is also an extension which holds or contains not movements or events, like time, but material objects, and as such, it is said to be a static extension. Our mind takes its stand at a particular point in it and looks round and measures the area around it by the number of material objects it

contains and thus forms an idea of space, just as the mind stops at a particular point and looks back and recounts the events that happened before and thereby measures and forms an idea of the length of time that has elapsed. Without this mobile extension or Time there would have been no room for events to happen and without spatial extension there would have been no room for material objects to be contained.

No doubt to a consciousness higher than the mind the past, present and future would be present in one eternal moment and spatial extension would appear to be an indivisible extension. But to our mental way of viewing things Time and Space are essential, for, without them there would be no change, no progression and no movement from past to future. A cosmic poet would eternally hold in his mind, in subjective grasp, all the wonders of the creation unless He brings them out one by one, step by step and distributes them all in an objective self-extension.

Thus all the harmonies of the Divine are being gradually worked out by Time through all forms and forces that are contained in Space, and through bitter shocks and struggles between various objects contained in space and various events happening in time this creation is proceeding towards perfect harmony. To our limited vision and separative judgment, life seems to be full of conflicts and it is often difficult for us to believe that the world is ever going to get out of these clashes and conflicts and drift towards a perfect harmony. But to a

consciousness not clouded by a partial and separative knowledge, the whole drama of creation would be revealed in an integral vision where the apparent discords would stand explained in a reconciling harmony. Just as, to the dramatist himself the entire plot of his play is present in his integral view and he is not ruffled even in the midst of the most poignant scene, unlike a member of the audience who sees only a portion of the play at a time and as such bound to be perturbed till he comes to the last act where the intervening discords stand explained in the light of a sense of poetic justice.

This creative Truth-Consciousness has also the faculty of casting out the divine principles of Existence-Conscious-Force, and Bliss unto the lower terms of Mind, Life and Matter with which we are familiar. It is a secondary power of this creative Knowledge which conceals the divine Triplicity completely behind the lower trilogy of Matter, Life and Mind. With its power of projecting, confronting and apprehending consciousness it gradually puts veil after veil over the divine plenitude and when pushed to its ultimate limit it becomes Avidya, the perennial source of ignorance, divisions and distinctions. This process has already been dealt at length in previous chapters and will be taken up again in the next chapter.

Such is the vision of the Divine Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness. It does not see or view things in pieces within a given time and space like the mind. It views all things in a multiple unity; it has an integral

view of things. It is the Force, the Presence behind every form, and every force in this universe; it is the Force that leads all things unerringly towards their destiny. It is not only the Divine, the Lord that is seated in the human heart, as chanted in the Gita; it is similarly seated in the heart of each and everything in existence, animate or inanimate, and impels it to unfold its inherent truth. This is the divine impulsion which is obeyed by all forms of existence, unconsciously sub-consciously or half-consciously. It is not only the source of the persistent aspiration in human hearts but it takes possession of the lower animals too and makes them perform very intricate acts of intelligence. This is the Divine supermind—the Truth-consciousness—which vibrates in every form and force. It is all-comprehensive, all-pervading, all-inhabiting.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRIPLE STATUS OF SUPERMIND

IN this chapter Sri Aurobindo gives us a resumé of what has been stated so far about the creative aspect of Brahman, the poise of Brahman that develops this world by his Maya out of the original self-concentrated Unity of His Being. It more fully describes the stages through which the Divine Conscious Force descended into division and ignorance. With a view to avoid a lot of confusion it may be stated here that this poise has been variously described by Sri Aurobindo as, Divine Supermind, Divine Maya (as the Vedic Seers knew it), Supreme Truth-Consciousness and Real-Idea. Every one of these terms indicates the same Power of Infinite Consciousness to shape finite appearances out of the Infinite Reality. It may be called, we repeat, a selective faculty of Knowledge which selects one order of Truth out of the Infinite possibilities of the Infinite Consciousness and by its Force casts out that Truth for manifestation according to a plan, a process or a Law already seen or conceived at the very inception of creation. This Divine Supermind is a link or a bridge, so to say, between the Unitary Self-Possession of the One and the phenomenal world. Besides it is a Conscious *Force* and as soon as it applies Itself or concentrates upon a particular Truth in the Divine it is

immediately cast out for manifestation by the self-effectuating Force of that consciousness. Like fire and its power of burning they are inseparable. The substance or the brightness of fire is not separable from its power of burning. Similarly the substance of the Divine Supermind is inseparable from its Power of manifestation, as aforesaid. This consciousness has a higher and a lower working—the comprehending and apprehending consciousness of the Supermind—which at its ultimate stage becomes the support and creator of the divisions and distinctions of Mind.

Before we proceed to further dissertation on this subject let us take a few concrete illustrations which may throw some light on the understanding of this knotty point. It is here stated in all humility that it is not possible to cite any illustration from human experience which can be anything like a clear analogy between the working of the Divine and the human consciousness. It will however be helpful if we can trace at least a faint analogy by which we may form some idea of the process of creation.

Let us take, for instance, the case of a person—well-versed in various subjects, history, philosophy, poetry and so on—sitting quietly at a particular moment, doing nothing, thinking of nothing in particular, his mind vacant, or in a state of self-possession, so to speak. Then he comes to think of reading or doing something and his mind sweeps over all the subjects he is capable of reading. His mind takes in, in a comprehensive awareness, so to speak, the various subjects in which he can take

interest. The next thing that his mind does is to select one book or one particular subject for study out of the several that he was capable of reading. Subsequently his mind concentrates upon the subject-matter of the book or the subject selected for study and the greater and more exclusive the concentration on that particular book or subject the more completely does his knowledge and awareness of the other subjects recede into the background of his consciousness; he becomes absorbed in the book selected and, for the time being, becomes oblivious of everything else than the subject matter of the book concentrated upon. More or less the same processes are involved whenever we elect to do a particular thing out of several alternatives. First, there is an awareness of all the things I could do, selection of one particular act out of several, concentration upon the doing of the act, that is to say, fixing the attention solely upon the steps, including physical locomotion if necessary, with a view to carry it out successfully.

Thus there are three essential stages which complete the process, namely, the stage when I mentally sweep over or become aware of the various things I am capable of doing; secondly, the stage of selecting one thing out of the several I am capable of doing and the last or the stage when I concentrate my attention upon doing the thing selected and applying all my resources, including physical locomotion that may be necessary to do that which I had elected to do out of several alternatives.

Let us now try to understand the working of the

creative aspect of the Infinite Consciousness. There are also three poises of the Divine Supermind during the process of the manifestation of one fixed order of Truth out of the infinite possibilities of Brahman. The first movement or poise *sees* the infinite potentialities of the Divine held in an inalienable unity, the second modifies that unity by *selecting* one order of Truth, namely the Many, for manifestation and does manifest, by its self-effectuating Force, the Many in One and the One in Many, and the third poise *puts further accent* on the manifestation of the Many which results in the development of a sense of exclusiveness in the individual which again gradually gives rise to the illusion of the Ego.

The first poise is said to be that of the all-comprehending, all-possessing, all-constituting consciousness of the Supermind. At this stage there is no selection or differentiation yet, no individualisation of any sort but just a comprehensive awareness of the infinite possibilities of the Divine. It is the Comprehensive consciousness or taking in at a comprehensive glance, so to speak, the infinite potentialities contained in the Divine consciousness.

By the second poise the Many is selected and cast out for manifestation out of the infinite Truths of the Divine consciousness. The Supermind concentrates upon this Truth, the Many, by what is said to be an apprehending consciousness and supports the manifestation of the individual Divine, or Jivatman—the *Pratirupa* of the

Upanishads. At this stage there has been differentiation of the individual Divine, the Jivatman, from the Universal Divine but no essential difference. It is a Lila of the Many with the One with which the Many do not abrogate their real unity. It is the play of the One in the Many and of the Many in the One. This stage is one of difference without a distinction.

Thereupon at the third poise, the Supermind projects itself further into the play of the Many and by further concentration on the Many—on the differentiation and division—the character of the Play is altered. From this stage there starts the gradual lapse into ignorance of Avidya. Each individual creates a divided habitation of its own, erects an exclusive wall of ignorance round itself and considers itself as different from the other. This division and distinction is pushed to its ultimate limit when the Plenary consciousness of the Divine Supermind gradually projects itself into inconscient Matter and from that state It resumes its journey back by gradually releasing Itself from its Self-imprisonment in Matter through a slow and difficult process of evolution.

These then are the three poises by which the Divine Supermind creates this world and manifests one order of Truth out of the infinite potentialities of the Infinite Consciousness. These three poises are the actual and creative aspects of Sachchidananda. Over and above this creative aspect exists eternally the timeless and spaceless concentration of Sachchidananda in Itself. That state is said to be the Pure Unitary Consciousness.

of Brahman, where there is no self-extension, no movement of creation and no differentiation—It is the Ineffable in a State of eternal self-possession.

This Divine Supermind is what we call God and God is said to be Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent. For, it is the Divine Supermind that is involved in and is the indwelling Presence in all that has been cast out for manifestation and, as such, Omnipresent. It is the Truth vision of the Supermind again that contains in itself the truth of things in the process of manifestation and, as such, Omniscient; and lastly, it is this Conscious Force and Will of God or the Divine Supermind that is involved in creation and is the impelling Force that speeds the stream of evolution towards its goal and, as such, Omnipotent. It is this conscious Force that makes the flower blossom and the tree emerge out of the seed. It is this conscious Force that has taken possession of the inanimate world and the world of the lower animals and makes them perform acts of intelligence. And It sits enthroned in the human heart as the Lord or Ishwara with a view to lead benighted mortals towards their Divine destiny.

In this creative aspect of Sachchidananda there is no clash between Will and Knowledge and Force. They are the aspects of one and the same Reality unlike human will and knowledge. As, for instance, I may have the requisite knowledge for doing a thing but not the Will to do it, or I may have both the Knowledge and the Will to do a particular thing but lack the power or the means

to do it. Thus as human beings we experience these conflicts between Knowledge, Will and Power or Force, but in the Supermind there are no such conflicts or problems.

In as much as the aforesaid three poises are the triple status of the Divine Supermind—the creative aspects of Sachchidananda—they are as real as Sachchidananda and none of them can be said to be an illusion. The Many are as real as the One, the creation is as real as the Creator. The mutually destructive schools of thought affirming the truth of the one or the other of the aforesaid aspects of Brahman owe their origin to the inherent incapacity of the human mind. While it lays stress on one of the aspects it takes that as *the sole and only* reality and asserts the unreality of the other. While the logic of the separative intellect accepts the Unitarian Consciousness as the sole Truth it denies the reality of the Play and treats it as illusory; or while it accepts the truth of the Many it rejects the validity of any spiritual experience which indicates the truth of the One and treats such experience as unreal. But it is not by these negations or exclusions that we shall arrive at the integral Truth which holds in itself the reality of the many and the one, the creation and the creator in a harmonious reconciliation.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DIVINE SOUL

It has been already stated before, that Life Divine is a record of some of the profoundest spiritual experiences of the Master which cannot be always rendered into the language of the human intellect. Yet in his inimitable way Sri Aurobindo has placed before us some of the truths, evidently seen by him, in a manner which the intellect can understand and form some conception of the Divine, the eternal Reality and the process by which the world has evolved out of it. From the clear exposition of the nature and working of the Divine Supermind we have now formed some idea of Divinity and Divine Life. We perceive the actual trend of the world manifestation, how Divine consciousness that gradually involved itself completely in Inconscience is awakening from its sleep of inconscience; in short all that came out of the Divine is going back to the Divine. Assured that our faith in a Divine Life is well founded, we would naturally ask ourselves, how we must act and change, in fact what would be the nature of our Sadhana, so that an integral transformation of our entire being will become possible. But we have to understand first, 'what will be the essential nature of the Divine Life to which we aspire?' In this

chapter, therefore, Sri Aurobindo considers the metaphysical foundation of Divine Life and its essential nature and principles. We have to try to understand it as best as we can by contrasting our own present ignorant nature with the essential nature of Divine Life.

It has been said that our ignorance is the cause of all the pain and evil to which we are subject and this ignorance is due to the "fall of Spirit into Matter and the eclipse of the soul by material nature". It is the Supermind, the creative consciousness of Sachchidananda, that selects the Many for manifestation, concentrates upon it and thereby supports the manifestation of the individual Divine. At this initial stage it becomes a play of the Many with the One, there has not yet been any sense of essential difference between them. Here the Many is held in the embrace of the One in integral awareness of their inalienable unity. It is the stage of a difference without a distinction, so to speak. Thereafter by further exclusive concentration the Supermind projects itself further into the play of the Many when the character of the play is altered. And from this stage begins the gradual lapse of the individual soul into the Ignorance of Avidya, when each individual begins to erect a wall of exclusiveness round itself and gradually each individual comes to consider himself as distinct and separate from the other—thus the sense of unity gives place to a sense of division and distinction. And this sense of division and distinction reaches its culmination when the Supermind conceals itself completely under the veil

of Inconscience and Matter. From its self-imprisonment in Matter the consciousness emerged through a slow and difficult process of evolution till it has reached the level of ego-centric mentality. It has not yet been able to exceed all the ignorance which was the inevitable consequence of the plunge of the Divine Soul in material nature. All the conflicts, all the disharmonies to which human beings seem to be eternally subject in this world are nothing else than the multiple incapacities of their material origin which are bound to wear away step by step as Consciousness gradually recovers itself completely from its self-imprisonment.

Let us now try to conceive what would be the Divine Soul like if it had not taken this last plunge into inconscience. What would be the nature of its existence if it had not been involved in Matter? Would it still be a existence afflicted by births and deaths and stumbling through a half-lit path of Ignorance, not yet awake from its sleep of inconscience? Not at all, it would certainly be something very different from the egoistic mentality we are familiar with. If the final plunge into the darkness of Matter and its partial liberation from it is the cause of all the ignorance, pain and evil of the egoistic individual, the Divine Soul that did not take that plunge or descend into that darkness would be free from all these limitations of material nature. And, as such, the existence of such a soul would be free from the scourges of deaths and disabilities, it would be a free play of immortal life. It would be free from the strifes and struggles of egoistic

nature, unperturbed by dislike, hatred, discontent and all the reactions thereof, mental or physical.

To such a soul the Absolute would not be merely an intellectual conception at best or something ineffable or unknowable which the intellect cannot envisage. Such a Divine Soul would be eternally conscious of itself as the manifestation of the Absolute, and a direct awareness of that truth would be the very foundation of its being and its infinite freedom and delight. It will be simultaneously aware in itself of the One in its self-concentrated unity, the eternal fund of the infinite possibilities of manifestation, as also in its poise of self-extension and infinite division. It will be directly aware of the eternal self-possession of Sachchidananda as the Silence out of which vibrates the Word or Name, the Formlessness as the basis of all forms, the self-conscious Being out of which emerges the wave of Becoming and the eternal Still Delight out of which wells out joy and love for ever.

Ever free from the bewildering sense of divisions and distinctions, the Divine Soul would sense all things as its own self, not divided in its becoming, would see all existences as soul-forms of the One, that is to say, He is the One that becomes All; would see all conscious forms of Him, that is to say, He is the One that contains the All as "the nave of a wheel contains the spokes"; and would also see the Self in all existences, that is to say, see the Self or Divine that inhabits all existences—*Yasya sarvabhūtāni ātmaivābhut, sarvāñibhūtāni ātmanyeva* and *sarvabhūteṣu ātmānam*, as the Upanishad describes it. It is the

ignorance of the human mind that misses the link of unity behind the multiplicity of the phenomenal world and perceives divisions and distinctions where there is unity, but to the Divine Soul all these present themselves as a triune realisation.

By its comprehensive self-knowledge the individual Divine would have its sense of oneness with the Cosmic or Universal and the Supra-cosmic or Transcendental Divine. Instead of division and distinction, unity would be the basis of all its experiences and knowledge, and as such, it would be free from all the discords of egoistic mentality and its relations with others will be guided by the same rule of concord and harmony, a direct awareness of unity in the midst of differentiation like the different notes of one infinite harmony. These, in short, are the metaphysical foundations of Divine Life. Apart from others, the one essential condition precedent to the possibility of Divine Life is the total abolition of our separatist egoism that has brought in its wake all the discords and disharmonies which cause so much sorrow and suffering in our lives.

It is the total ignorance of the sense of unity that constitutes his fall from the Divine and it will be by removing that ignorance and recovering that sense of unity that man will ascend to the Life Divine.

CHAPTER XVIII

MIND AND SUPERMIND

WE have just tried to form a conception of the essence of the Supramental life which the Divine Soul enjoys and which the human soul, handicapped as it is by the mental and physical principles, has to manifest here. But as far as we have been able to understand, the nature and the form of existence that the Divine Soul possesses has not only nothing in common with the ways of life with which we are familiar but rather it seems to be the opposite of all that we are ourselves at this stage. We are burdened with a body and a half-ignorant mentality sustained during its short-lived existence by what we understand as Life. In point of fact it seems that the mind, the short-lived flicker we call life and the body, the three terms which, as far as we are aware, are the components of the human individual, are the three insurmountable obstacles to the attainment of a supramental or Divine Life which seems in every way to be their antithesis. It is extremely difficult to conceive of Divine Life in this threefold limitation of the body, a form-imprisoned mind and the short span of a troubled existence we call life. Divine life seems rather to be a condition which disembodied souls might aspire to and enjoy in a world where none of the aforesaid limita-

tions exist—the drag of the flesh, the ignorance of a dividing mind and the tortures of a short-lived life.

In a previous chapter we have tried to form some idea of the working of the Divine Maya of Sachchidananda that developed the world out of the original self-concentrated unity of its Being. But we have not yet examined and understood the working of the Undivine Maya which cast the world into its present state of ignorance and suffering. Indeed so complete is the opposition between the four divine terms, namely, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Supermind and the three lower terms with which alone we are at present familiar namely, Mind, Life and Body which are said to have developed out of the said divine terms, that it is hard to believe in the divine destiny of man and to our comprehension 'it rather seems that the perfection of humanity is elsewhere than in humanity itself.'

Mind, life and body then seem to be the three impediments of the soul's journey towards divine life on earth. And unless we are assured that these lower terms are only subordinate activities of the divine consciousness and they are capable of divinity by a gradual exceeding of their limitations, we can hardly look forward to our ultimate divine destiny with hope and confidence. What then are these three lower terms in their supreme sources? What is their real reality? How have they developed by limitation out of their divine counterparts? How have they been cut off and separated from the integral Truth? In short, we have to understand the working of the

Undivine Maya, that is to say, the subordinate process of depiecing and delimitation by which this world has become possible.

Before proceeding further we have to remember that there is the One without a second and whatever has been manifested, divine or undivine, has been manifested within that One existence. All that exists must have been woven out of the Being of the One and, as such, hold in themselves, though involved, some truth of that One existence. Hence these lower terms of mind, life and body must hold in themselves, though concealed for the time being, some essential truth of the One Reality. If it is made of gold, however dirty or leaden a piece of ornament might appear to be, it must possess all the essential properties of gold under cover of its dirty exterior and it is bound to recover the shine of gold after the necessary brush up.

In the light of the above concession then, we have to find out those aspects of Sachchidananda of which mind, life and matter of which the human individual is composed, are distorted reflections and the process by which these distortions have been brought about. In order to do this we have to make a passing reference to the three poises by which the Divine Supermind brought the Many for manifestation out of the infinite potentialities of Sachchidananda.

There is the eternal poise of Brahman, the self-possessed unitary consciousness where there is no movement of creation, no self-extension. It is the self-concentrated

unity of His Being, a state of pure Superconscience, so to say, where the Knower, the Known and the Knowledge are mingled in a state of eternal self-awareness. Out of this self-concentrated unity of His Being, the Creative Consciousness of Brahma, termed the Divine Supermind or the Divine Maya, has developed this world. There are three poises of the Divine Supermind in the process of creating this world of names and forms, as follows.

First, there is the self-conceptive extension of the Divine consciousness when the Supermind sees the infinite potentialities contained in the Divine. This is the stage when the Supermind just views the various possibilities in the Divine. There has not yet been a selection of any truth for manifestation out of the infinite Truths that are capable of being manifested—it is a comprehensive glance, so to speak, or a comprehensive awareness of the infinite possibilities involved in the Divine consciousness before actually selecting any of them for manifestation. This is said to be the comprehending consciousness.

Secondly, that is to say, at the second stage, so to speak, a particular order of Truth, namely, the Many is selected by the Supermind out of the infinite potentialities of the Divine and cast out for manifestation. It is the apprehending consciousness of the Supermind which thus selects one order of Truth and which concentrates upon this selected order of Truth, namely, the Many, and thereby supports the manifestation of the Many, the individual Divine or as Sri Aurobindo calls it the

Jivatman. At this stage the Many do not in any way abrogate its unity with the One. It is a play of the Many in the One and of the One in the Many. Here the Many are integrally conscious of their inalienable unity with the Divine One. There is yet no difference, no sense of division and distinction. It is the stage of the manifestation of the Divine souls when the Many and the One are bound in a state of integral awareness,—this is the higher working of the Divine Maya when ignorance is not yet born.

Thirdly, at the next stage the Supermind further concentrates on the Many—on the divisions and distinctions to which the Many ultimately resolves itself—when the character of the Play is altered and there starts a gradual lapse into the ignorance of Avidya. The knowledge or awareness of the unity with the One gradually recedes into the background and step by step a sense of division and distinction becomes the prevailing feature when each individual creates a divided habitation of its own and erects an exclusive wall of ignorance round itself and feels itself as separate from the other. Each individual forgets its real self and gropes in the darkness of a divided consciousness. By a further and more and more exclusive concentration of the Divine Supermind the sense of division and distinction is pushed to its utmost limit and the Supermind gradually projects itself completely into inconscient materiality. It puts on a mask of inconscience. Thus from a state of superconscience out of which it started, the creative movement, by more and more exclusive concentration, gradually

involved itself completely in its own work of creating division and distinction and thereby imprisoned itself in matter. And the evolutionary creation of this world of multiple names and forms is the journey back from inconscience when the Divine Supermind gradually releases itself from its self-imprisonment in matter, step by step, through a slow and difficult process of evolution. This, in short, is the picture of the creative activity of the Divine consciousness whereby the Many was selected and cast out for manifestation through the principal stages mentioned, and the Divine Mother is now in travail to rekindle the Light of Knowledge in the human individual during this journey back from inconscience to Divine humanity.

But the question still remains to be answered, whence this ignorance? How could Knowledge convert itself into its opposite, namely, Ignorance? Supermind being the Creatrix of this world and the Truth behind all appearances, individual and cosmic, what brought about this fall into the depth of Ignorance and Avidya from the supramental heights? What is the magic that turned the Light into complete Darkness?

Before we proceed to answer the question we have to understand the real nature of the darkness that seems to have enshrouded the entire firmament. This darkness is not the negation of light, nor the Ignorance the negation of Knowledge. Ignorance is a power of knowledge and behind it knowledge is involved. It is by exclusive concentration of consciousness upon division and dis-

tion that complete ignorance of the Unity has been brought about. We have seen that exclusive concentration on a particular action or play keeps the mind rivetted to the subject of concentration only and the rest of the contents of the mind recede into the background for the time being. When for instance, we read a particular book with attention we concentrate upon its contents. The more intently, or let us say exclusively, we are able to concentrate on the subject-matter of the book the more completely do we forget, for the time being, other matters of interest to us which gradually recede behind the focus of our consciousness and our mind becomes temporarily ignorant of them all. It remains conscious only of the contents of the book upon which it is concentrated and ignorant, as it were, of the rest of its knowledge. The greater and more exclusive the concentration on a particular action or a particular subject the greater is the ignorance of the rest of our knowledge. This is a matter of everyday experience.

A game of chess, for instance, demands very great concentration on the play. While having a game of chess one concentrates so exclusively on the details of the play that he forgets for the time being everything else in this world, even his own identity, and remains conscious only of the game on which his mind is absorbed—he becomes the play, so to speak. A good actor, for instance, has to concentrate intensely on the part he takes up in a drama, if he is to do a bit of successful acting. If he plays the part of a king, he has to think like a king, talk like a king

and in every way behave like a king as far as possible. The success of his acting depends upon how completely he can forget his identity in his concentration upon his temporary role. In short, the greater the concentration of the actor upon his part in the drama, the greater comes a temporary forgetfulness of his own identity and the truth of his normal self.

All the aforesaid instances, with which we are familiar, only indicate that the ignorance is the result of exclusive concentration of the mind on a particular subject or action when the knowledge of other subjects and activities, which the mind is capable of engaging in, nay, the awareness of a man's own identity, only recede to the background. These are not instances of negation of knowledge, but our knowledge or awareness of all the other things becomes involved behind our preoccupation on a particular subject or activity for the time being. This is a state when the knowledge of all the other subjects or possible activities is gathered behind and it again comes to the front as soon as the said exclusive concentration is withdrawn. The reader of the book, the player and the actor come back to themselves, so to speak, as soon as they withdraw from their exclusive concentration on their respective activities.

It is also evident that this concentration is a power of the mind or consciousness, not an incapacity, as may be wrongly supposed, and it is not every person that has this power in a large measure. One's knowledge of the subject-matter of a book, or knowledge of a game has

the power to concentrate upon it exclusively, so much so that the mind drifts into temporary ignorance of everything else—this ignorance then is a power of knowledge and not its negation.

Thus as a result of more and more exclusive concentration of the Divine Supermind on multiplicity the Many gradually loses its sense of unity, its sense of integral awareness of the One and the elements of division and distinction become more and more prominent till the Supermind is completely absorbed, as it were, in Matter, in its task of infinite division. And it is in Matter that infinite division has been possible in millions and millions of tiny atoms, each separate from the other and each cooped up in its own world of ignorance and division. Such is the way of the Divine and it is thus that the Supermind wears a mask of ignorance. It is a plunge of Light into its own shadow, so to speak, by exclusive concentration. And in the journey back, the Divine Supermind is gradually releasing itself from its self-imprisonment in matter, step by step, through a slow and difficult process of evolution. Our mind which has thus slowly evolved out of matter is still suffering from the effects of its recent imprisonment in matter and it has not yet been able to shake itself free from the disabilities of its material origin. As such, our mind which is only a distorted reflection of the Supermind, has not yet been able to cast off its ignorance sufficiently to be aware of the Vastness behind it and of which it is the frontal aspect. But all the same it is a faint glimmer of

the Supermind and is bound to grow into its full stature as Supermind gradually awakes from its sleep of inconscience and withdraws itself more and more from its exclusive concentration in matter.

It is a subordinate process of delimitation through which the world of division and distinction has been brought about. This subordinate process is a further projection of the Divine Supermind and Sri Aurobindo says, that this process may be called the Divine Mind. This Divine Mind though conscious of the infinite in the finite, converts each conscious soul into an abode of ignorance and makes division and distinction the ruling feature of terrestrial nature. This process may be called the lower working of the Divine Maya, otherwise termed the Undivine Maya or Avidya, which creates all these multiplicities in the bosom of the Unity.

The division had started from the stage of the creation of the Divine Souls, but it was a division of form from form only, when, the Divine Souls did not forfeit their sense of unity with the One. It was just a 'feigning' and not a real limitation. It is the next lower stage of Avidya, the self-ignoring faculty, that gradually brought about the complete separation of the action of the mind from the action of the Supermind.

We have seen how by exclusive concentration our mind may be fixed exclusively on a particular activity in complete oblivion of the rest of its contents for the time being. Similarly, Avidya which arises out of the exclusive concentration of the Divine Consciousness on

the Multiplicity brings about the limiting ignorance of the mind. Hence mind cannot take any integral view of Truth; it depieces, limits, divides and then again aggregates and goes on enlarging its aggregates more and more but it cannot get back into the sense of true infinity. The human mind thus lapsing into this divided mentality lives in a world of its own, rigidly kept apart from all the others by a dark wall of egoistic ignorance. And with his ignorance further deepened by his self-identification with the body, man gropes his way through his earthly adventure in the uncertain light of his half-lit consciousness.

Wrapped in the veil of Avidya man wallows in the ignorance of his surface consciousness in complete oblivion of even his inner being which is free from many of the errors of the surface consciousness. Though not yet free from the original error of division and distinction, the physical being, the vital being and the mental being—Annamaya Purusha, Pranamaya Prushsa and Manomaya Purusha—which are the components of his Inner Being is capable of a less fettered action. This Inner Being knows itself as more than the body. Unlike our present surface consciousness or Outer Being, as it may be called, its knowledge of the human individual is not limited by this life and this body. In various other respects it has some advantage over our egoistic consciousness. In our normal surface consciousness we can only guess the working of the minds of other individuals by their outward expressions, namely, speech,

behaviour and so on. And even within this limited scope most of our conclusions from such outward expressions may be wrong. But the Inner Being has the power of becoming directly conscious of the working of the minds of other selves without the instrumentation of the senses, and the knowledge of other selves as it can obtain by such direct awareness is not erroneous like many a random conclusion of the surface mind.

But this Inner Being is also veiled in ignorance, though a few shades less than the surface mind and it gets only an image of the Truth and not the Truth itself from which it continues to remain separated. The Inner Being is also an instrument of ignorance and not knowledge.

But mind will recover its Truth when the veil of ignorance brought about by Avidya or the exclusive concentration of the Divine Supermind, is lifted, just as the human mind exclusively concentrated on a particular action or subject comes to remember everything else when it withdraws itself from its temporary absorption in that particular action or subject.

It will then appear that the mind which is a distorted reflection of the Supermind could take only distorted visions of the Truth. On account of its separation from self-knowledge Truth is falsely conceived by the mind. Instead of seeing the multiplicity as the law, as it now does, mind has to see the Unity behind the multiplicity, the hidden string round which is woven the Divine multiplicity. But this it can only do when the present veil of

ignorance which keeps it oblivious of its own Truth is lifted.

Mind is the final operation of the apprehending consciousness of the Supermind when the Mind loses its self-knowledge and conceives of itself as a distinct and separate fact and, read in the light of this separateness, most of the conclusions of the Mind are tainted with falsehood and error. It has a limited knowledge of the present, takes things only as they appear to its limited vision and understanding and more often than not comes to erroneous conceptions of things. All this is the result of the exclusive concentration of the Supermind. But it is not a state of negation of knowledge; for self-knowledge has only receded to the background and it is for the Mind to gradually release itself from its absorption in its surface ignorance and recover all that it had forgotten in its exclusive concentration on division and distinction. It will be then that the Mind will resolve all its errors into truth, all its weakness into strength, all its sorrows and sufferings into delight and we return to that state of immortality which we are striving to reach through ages and ages of births and deaths and all their experiences of poignant sufferings.

Thus it is that the Mind is only the result of a special action of the Divine Consciousness and it need not be a real impediment on the path of the human pilgrim towards his divine destiny.

CHAPTER XIX

LIFE

IN the last chapter we have seen the real nature of Mind and its relation with the Divine Supermind. A special action of the Divine Supermind, Mind is the parent of divisions and distinctions but until it is not completely separated from its source of Light and Knowledge, namely, Supermind, it supports the working of the universal Truth. As a result of the original scheme of creation—*Bahusyām Prajayeeti* (May I be Many)—infinite divisions had to follow and Mind as the parent of divisions and distinctions seems to be a creative agency.

Is Mind then a sort of creative agency? To our experience mind seems to be quite a different sort. It is an organ which, with the instrumentation of its senses, builds up a pragmatic knowledge of the phenomenal world which has been already created by some Force working subconsciously in matter. But recent scientific investigations have revealed that there is a sub-conscious working of Mind in Matter and what we call material force is in fact an energy-form of Mind. There are such unmistakable signs of intelligent working in material nature that a sub-conscious Mind or Intelligence seems to have created this material world. It seems, what we call material force is nothing else than the driving power

of the Mind or Intelligence, sub-conscious in matter which has created and shaped this world in a manner which intelligence alone is capable.

We have however seen in the last chapter that Mind is not an independent or isolated entity. It is a frontal aspect of the Supermind. Hence wherever there is evidence of Mind, there must be the Supermind or Truth-consciousness of which Mind is a final operation. Supermind therefore is the real Creative Agency. In the subconscious working of matter there is the Supermind to produce a proper world of law and order, to bring harmony out of chaos.

At the very inception of the creative activity of the Divine Consciousness It saw and conceived and cast out for manifestation multiplicity, divisions and distinctions, a divided representation of Itself, and as such, the Law or truth in this world is nothing else than bringing out this world of names and forms in accordance with the exact pattern seen by the Divine consciousness or Divine knowledge as aforesaid. The flower that blossoms is the revealing of its truth contained in the bud, the bringing out of that which was implied in the essence and nature of the bud. The seed contains the truth of the tree that sprouts forth revealing the truth of its being latent in the seed. Similarly, the stream of creation is no more than the gradual manifestation of the truth of things concealed in their self-being and self-law—*Svabhāva* and *Swadharma*—as originally conceived by the Divine consciousness.

As we look round ourselves towards the marvels of creation, we seek for an intelligence at the root of things, for, to us intelligence is the highest principle so far; if we have reasons to suspect that there is consciousness latent in the universe, we naturally come to think that it is no other than mental consciousness, with which alone we are familiar. But we have to perceive that our mind does no more than record, as far as its limitations permit, the wondrous working of a Power, a dynamism, much superior to itself and, as such, we have to understand that it is not mere intelligence, not a sub-conscious Mind, but some Power much greater than that, the Divine Supermind, that is the creator of this universe; it is the dynamic energy of the Supermind that creates all the names and forms of the physical world according to their Truth as conceived or seen by the Divine consciousness at the very inception of its creative activity.

We have thus seen the real nature of the mind and its relation to the Supermind. But we find that mind is manifested in Life. What then is Life? What relation, if any, does Life bear to Sachchidananda and from which particular principle of that Trinity has Life taken its birth? In our own triple world of Mind-Life-Body we live in, each of the above three principles, namely, Mind, Life and Body seems to be full of such limitations as would make each of them appear to be an insurmountable obstacle to Divine Life on earth. But we have just seen in the last chapter that Mind is a frontal aspect of the Supermind.

and it is capable of exceeding its limitations. What about Life?

Stricken with death and various disabilities, life has been looked upon as an evil in all ages. Unable to find the real significance of life, distressed humanity has, through all the ages, been wondering, what could be the Divine purpose behind all the turmoils of life and how could the benign Creator inflict such terrible sufferings upon His creatures. And the natural reaction of such feeling has been a tendency to seek an escape into the peace and repose of the Eternal from the inevitable pain and suffering of embodied existence we call life.

What we have just stated may not be all the truth about life. It may, after all, be some divine principle, some force, that is expressing itself in creating millions and millions of living forms in the countless worlds of the universe. Examined closely, life seems to be some cosmic energy, some Force which builds up forms and maintains them through the constant process of disintegration and renewal. A particular *form* of life, say of some lower animal or of human being, persists through births and deaths. That is to say, a species is maintained not by the permanence of the *members* of that species, but by a continuous stream of births and deaths. Similarly, a race is maintained not by the physical immortality of every member constituting that race, but by a series of births and deaths—the younger and still younger stepping into the gap formed by the exit of the older persons. It is thus by a process of disintegration and renewal that a species is

maintained. The opposition we are accustomed to make between death and life is an error of our mentality. Again, death of a particular body does not mean that life has vanished completely from the body. The force that builds up the bodies and keeps them active for a time is the same force that disintegrates the substance of the body after, what we call, death, and uses the materials for the formation of other bodies. This is the uniform process and law of nature. There is, in short, one all-pervading dynamic energy called Life, which creates all forms of the physical universe. It is the Force which is inherent in the earth, the plant, and the animals and it is the same Force again that creates, maintains and destroys all forms from the level of the plants right up to that of humanity.

It may however be said that what we mean by life is something quite different from all that has been stated in the foregoing paragraph. By life what we mean is a particular *result* of that Universal Force which manifests in the animal and the plant but not in any other level below that of plants. It is not in the earth or stone or in such other things we call inanimate. Before proceeding further, therefore, let us carefully examine what we exactly mean by Life and what are the realms of the play of that force we call life.

The Universal Force has three realms of play, namely, the animal kingdom (including ourselves) the vegetable kingdom and the rest which, let us call, the kingdom of not-life. We have now to see the difference of the play

of life in us and the vegetable world and from the region of what we call not-life, namely, the metal, stone, and so on. To us life precisely means animal life, such as can breathe, move, feel, eat and evince various passions and emotions. When we say, there is life in plants, we say no more than a metaphor; at any rate we do not include plants strictly in the category of what we believe as living beings. With us life is associated with certain activities, such as, breathing, mobility and so on, and wherever these activities are absent we consider life to be extinct. But if we ponder for a while we immediately realise that these activities are only the processes of life and not life itself. Breath is not life but it is only a particular expression of life and so on. Nay, even some of the expressions which we consider to be most essential or invariable accompaniment of life, namely, breathing, beating of the heart and so on can be suspended for a while and yet human life can remain and in full consciousness, too. Similarly, looking at the other end there are certain physical organisations in plants too similar to those in ourselves. Thus we have to give up the habit of mistaking some of the symptoms for the thing signified and should ignore the externalities as inessential and go to the root of the matter.

An eminent Indian physicist has discovered and it is now a commonly accepted truth in the scientific world that response to stimulus is an infallible sign of life. Like breathing, response to stimulus is an outward sign of life and this response is affirmed not only in

plants but also in metals. Besides, if sufficiently sensitive instruments could be used, it would be found that in however rudimentary a condition, this outward sign of life, namely response to stimulus, would be found even in the sub-metal world, in earth or even in the tiny atoms that constitute earth or metal. Judged by this test, namely, capacity of response to stimulus, life would seem to be a force or energy which is all-pervading, stretching much further than what we ordinarily think of and right down to earth and atoms. Let us however remember that this response is only an outward sign of the presence of life in the sub-mental and sub-metal worlds just as breathing and locomotion are so many outward signs of life in ourselves. The energy or force inherent or latent in a particular material object just answers to the energy or force that is applied to that object from outside. This is what is described as reaction or response to stimuli. Every shock of energy from outside is answered with a counter-shock, however feeble or rudimentary, from inside. This in short is the working of the Life-Force which pervades all the realms of existence, human, sub-human, metal, sub-metal, and the rest of it down to the tiniest bits that constitute material existence. And it is with only a particular aspect of its expression in human beings that we wrongly equate this Life-Force.

Besides, life does not become extinct in the body even when some of the habitual outward physical signs are absent. There are cases of suspended animation when there remains in the body none of the outward signs of life and

yet life remains latent and after a time the usual symptoms reappear. In a state of catalepsy, for instance, the physical response are absent but there remain life and mind conscious though unable to respond in the manner they usually do. In some cases of trance both the physical and mental functionings cease to operate for a time and after a while they resume their usual outward operations. The Force that keeps the body and the rest of it going only suspends for a time its outward operations. Even when a human body is dead, life in the body remains active to disintegrate the formed substance we call body. The Force that was so long active in holding together the formed substance, namely the body, and carried on its various activities, now plays a different role and continues to remain active in disintegrating the body.

Life is really the play of a universal force which builds up different organisations of matter, stimulates material objects in the various grades of animation in their action and reaction against one another, disintegrates formed substances whenever necessary and uses them as materials for further integration; thus it is, that the dynamic play of the Force we call life goes on through the process of construction and destruction. But we are reluctantly prepared to admit some form of life in plants only because there is evidence of sub-conscious sensation in plants which bears a very faint resemblance to such sensations in ourselves. Broadly speaking, there are only two points of difference between life in ourselves and in the plant. In us there is a power of locomotion

which is not at all an essential sign of vitality. Secondly, we are conscious of the sensations, of the actions and reactions in our mind as the result of our contact with the external world. In the plant there is also sub-conscious sensation as the response to stimulus but that response or reaction is not recorded by a mind as in the human. There is evidently nervous reaction in the plant that shrinks from external contact, very similar to such reaction in man, with this difference that in the plant such reaction is not recorded or noted by a vigilant mind as in the human. But the fact that the plant is not awake to its reactions makes no difference to its possession of a vital system which is not very different from ours. Similarly in the metal there is a more rudimentary operation of the sub-conscious sense-mind and a line of demarcation cannot be drawn between what we conceive to be the reality of life and that of not-life. In ourselves too some habitual movements of the body and the nerves and sense-mind go on perfectly without our being aware of them or, in other words, without our conscious mind taking any notice of them. In sleep, for instance, our body makes all the habitual movements correctly though the surface awareness is not recording them. The fact is that in the sub-mental world, in the plants, metal, earth and so on, the life-force is not yet fully awake from the sleep of Matter and as such, it does its work sub-consciously what it does consciously in man where it has awakened from its absorption in matter.

Even the atoms betray the presence of a sub-conscious

force which gradually develops into the human Will. In the atom there is a force of attraction and repulsion which seem to be essentially the same tendencies as subsequently develop into likes and dislikes in ourselves. There is unmistakable evidence of intelligent Will and Desire in the workings of material nature, and often intricate acts of intelligence are visible in the movements of the material world. Like millions and millions of somnambulists, the atoms which by their aggregation constitute Matter, display acts of intelligence and Will, as if, impelled by a Force and consciousness which still remains in deep slumber. That Force is no other than the Chit-Tapas or Chit-Shakti, the inherent consciousness-Force of the Divine which had completely involved Itself in Matter and during Its gradual reawakening from the sleep of inconscience manifests Itself step by step in the form of sub-mental sensations in the plants, desire-will in the lower animal world till it has finally emerged as mental-will in man. It is the same Force that was completely submerged in Matter and is all-pervasive. Life in the plant has all the essential characteristics of life in the animal kingdom as is marked by birth, growth, and decay and dissolution and it evinces various essential symptoms of life-dynamism with which we are familiar.

Life then is an operation of the Conscious-Force of the Divine and it is essentially the same from atom to humanity and varies only in its degree of manifestation on the various levels. At the earliest stage it acts subconsciously in Matter where it seems to be completely submerged

in the sleep of inconscience. At the next stage, though still sub-mental, it responds to stimuli without any conscious regard of the actions and reactions arising out of its contact with the external world, and, lastly, it further develops and becomes the basis of mentality from the lower animals right up to intelligent human beings.

This, then, is all the truth about Life and as such it is no more an impediment to the possibility of Divine Life than Mind which is only a frontal aspect of the Supermind.

CHAPTER XX

DEATH, DESIRE AND INCAPACITY

IN the last chapter we have discussed the nature of the reality behind what we call Life, its working and its part in the evolutionary process of the world. It is, in reality, no other than an operation of the Conscious-Force of Sachchidananda and It is the same Force that is inherent in material existence, from the atoms right up to human beings. It is only with a particular aspect of its manifestation in humanity that we are accustomed to identify it, nay, we even mistake some of the signs of its presence in a particular body for the thing itself. But Life, as we have seen, is a universal force which is shaping and creating forms and even maintaining them through a process of dissolution and reconstruction.

In the world we inhabit, Life was involved in Matter out of which it slowly emerged, just as Mind gradually manifested in Life in which it was evidently involved and sub-conscious. Supermind is similarly involved in Mind which is its frontal aspect. Thus out of Matter, which is the basis, emerged the other principles, Life and Mind. From the atom, instinct with sub-conscious life and mind right up to humanity, it is one long story, an unbroken continuity of the working of the same universal energy we call life. Mind and Life are essentially the manifesta-

tion of the same Consciousness-Force of the Divine working for a specific purpose, namely, help create and maintain separate forms, distinct and separate individuals in a state of complete demarcation and egoistic ignorance. Life is the energy of the Divine that not only creates and maintains forms through integration and annulment but it is also constantly playing with the outgoing and incoming shocks of its own dynamo which penetrate, kill and create the myriad forms of material existence.

As life is an operation of the conscious-force we cannot know the real nature and process of the working of life unless and until we fully realise the nature of that conscious-force working behind Life which is its external aspect. Mind has to shake off the limitations imposed on it by the action of Avidya and unite with the Supermind from which it was temporarily separated for a special purpose; similarly, Life has to become aware of the conscious-force of which it is an ignorant instrument.

We have seen in a previous chapter how by exclusive concentration one can put on a cloak of temporary ignorance and remain fixed to a limited field of consciousness. Thus by exclusive concentration the individual soul has bound itself to self-limitation and self-ignorance and regards itself as a distinct and separate individuality. It is on account of this perversion that the universal force or Life has also become imprisoned in an individual action and exists and acts as a separate life and thus, insufficiently equipped to absorb the shocks and pressure of cosmic life around it, is subject to Death

and to all the other poignant sufferings of which it seems to be a helpless victim. As Life in us gradually awakens to the Truth of its nature, that it is no other than the Conscious-Force of the Lord and Master of the universe, it tries to take control of its own world and release itself from the bondage of a divided existence. It has to become consciously one with the universal Will, the All-Will, before it can free itself from Death, Desire and Incapacity, "the three badges of its limitation".

What we call Death is due to several important causes. The life in the body has to maintain itself against the energies external to it and it has to draw upon and feed upon them as food in its attempt to affirm itself against the shocks of cosmic life around it. Life has thus to contend against all the external forces by which it is surrounded and is therefore constantly exposed to the possibility of being broken up by them. Often it is unable to protect itself from being devoured by external forces or absorb the constant shocks received from outside and, as such, it is broken up for a new construction. Besides, as life attempts to establish a mastery over its environment there is a corresponding increase in reaction in the forces that surround it and the struggle becomes intense. As a result of this struggle life is often overcome and gets dissolved for a new construction unless and until the life-force succeeds in establishing a harmony among all the contending forces. Lastly, there is another important aspect of the question which reveals to us the justification of Death as a process of Life.

The ultimate significance of creation and of the terrestrial adventure of the soul is to seek infinite experience in a finite form. From the very nature and constitution of embodied existence, change of form is necessary so that the soul may seek infinite experience not in one embodied existence, which is not possible, but through repeated change of forms and thus build up its fund of experiences culled from successive lives and retain the essentials thereof in its sub-conscious or superconscious memory. With every change of form the body has to undergo dissolution according to the process and working of the Universal energy, the All-Life, in material universe. The embodied life carries on a ceaseless struggle with its environment, gives and receives shocks till it succumbs to the Law of Death in a world of mutual devouring. It is thus through eternal change of form and experience that the finite mind encased in a living body seeks to attain infinity. The old form is dissolved and old forms are taken and thrown in new and ever new environment with a view to gain new and ever new experience every time. And it is the thought of pain and suffering that is associated with death and the feeling of wrench felt in human hearts at the thought of forced separation from the loved ones and all the dear little things of life to which his ego clings with the warmest attachment is what makes the thought of death so poignant to the human mentality. But Death is necessary as a process of Life in a state of mutual devouring which is the initial law of life in Matter. But this law of mutual devouring will gradually give place

to the law of sacrifice and love as the law of division will ultimately give place to the Law of Unity, and Death will change to immortality.

Desire is born out of the incapacity of Life. The divided life-force is weak and full of incapacities but it has the impulse of self-enlargement and possession out of all proportion to its actual capacity. Its impulse of possession does not take any note of its weakness or incapacity and the failure to attain its end every time owing to its incapacity is the cause of desire. If Life could get or possess whatever it wanted to possess, there would have been no occasion for desire, but the inherent weakness of a divided Life cannot cope with its impulse for possession and thus arises Desire which is only the gulf between the impulse of possession and the force of possession.

Our mind is separated from Supermind and as such it is not free from ignorance and it has no direct and integral awareness of Truth. It has to grope its way forward in partial darkness until it exceeds its present limitations and recovers its Knowledge from which it had fallen. Similarly, individualised life is an energy of the ignorant mind and as such, it is bound to have all the incapacities of a limited and divided manifestation, for, it is unthinkable that an all-powerful life-force shall be the energy of an ignorant mind.

Thus in its attempt at self-enlargement amid the various shocks of material nature, Life has to proceed, at the outset, through Death, Desire and Strife till it

succeeds in affirming itself as the Divine Life-Principle instead of the dark figure of Omnipotence which it seems to be at present.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ASCENT OF LIFE

IN a previous chapter we have seen how Life is in reality a play of a Universal Force, and, as such, immortality, satisfied delight and omnipotence should be its highest terms. But instead of all these we find life here invariably associated with death, hunger and incapacity. The reason for these incapacities is that Life has not yet fully released itself from its imprisonment in Matter and therefore it is said to be a dark figure of the Divine Super-conscious Force. Like mind, which is a distorted reflection of the Divine Supermind, Life is subject to all the incapacities of a partial emergence.

Life first starts with extreme divisions and rigid forms of Matter and up to date it has expressed itself in three stages. At the first stage which is said to be the *material expression* of Life, it expresses itself as a blind action of energy which is the basis of all movements in the material world at its very inception. At the time when consciousness did not awake from its sleep of inconscience, there were gigantic movements in the material world which were the first expression of the same universal force of which Life is a divided action. At this initial stage consciousness is concealed in its superficial action and Life makes its appearance as the blind and

inconscious Force—as the physical scientists take it to be—which seems to have shaped this world and regulated all its movements. Though seemingly erratic and without any conscious guidance, this Force is at the bottom of all the movements that have given shape and form to this world and evolved order out of chaos.

The next stage is that of the *Vital expression* of Life when consciousness has partially emerged. This is the second status where the look of things undergoes a substantial change. At this stage, with a slowly emerging consciousness Life seeks to affirm itself through three terms, namely, death and mutual devouring, hunger and vital craving and lastly, a sense of incapacity coupled with a struggle to expand and to possess. These three terms are expressive of the second status of Life and they have been made the bases for the Darwinian theory of evolution, the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Since limitation and incapacity were the features of this the middle term of Life, there was bound to be a constant struggle for survival and a struggle for perfection. There was, besides, a constant urge to adapt itself to the environment which was bearing down upon it from all sides—a constant attempt at self-preservation, self-assertion and aggressive living.

Thereafter as Life proceeds towards Mind and consciousness further releases itself from its self-imprisonment in Matter, we find the stage of the *Mental expression* of Life. This is the third stage of Life where the whole aspect puts on a completely different hue and preserva-

tion of life through mutual devouring gives place to preservation of life through love and self-giving. It is possible that even after the advent of man upon the face of this earth the law of the jungle ruled the caveman for a time, but it was soon realised that it is not by mutual devouring but by mutual love and self-giving that life can be prolonged. Besides, it was realised as it became evident from the nature of physical life that individual forms could not continue to have individual existence and, as such, permanence was sought to be established for its species rather than for itself. Thus it became increasingly necessary to have mutual co-operation and the goodwill of others—the wife, the child, friends and groups—and out of this necessity was born the feeling of love and self-giving. Even at the initial stage, however strong might have been the urge of the individual to keep an isolated existence and thrive by mutual devouring, there came an equally strong pull from the opposite direction for association, mutual help and co-operation.

It appears that every individual existence, from the tiny atom right up to the human being, obeys the impulsion of the Law of unity in difference. Life as we have seen starts with an accent on rigid divisions in Matter and each atom insists on remaining separate and resists fusion with others. And yet the call of unity is as strong as that of division and, so, the atoms while retaining their distinctness respond to the call of unity by aggregation. Similarly, human individuals, while

retaining their respective identities and egoistic activities answered to this pull of unity by gravitating towards one another. Thus it was that a sense of exclusiveness and dissociation gave place to a craving for association and comradeship, mutual devouring and aggressive living yielded place to love and self-giving.

Thus throughout the course of its expression we find in Life two distinct tendencies, the will of individual existence to retain its separateness and the call of unity to mix or merge with others. In the atomic stage of life, persistence or continuity of individual existence is attempted by aggregation with others, and such aggregations give rise to forms which afterwards become the basis of vital and mental individualisation. That is to say, the basis of our separate physical existence is our material body which is formed of the aggregation of millions and millions of atoms. The nature of physical existence is such that it is not possible to retain a persistent personality, as this physical body and consciousness has to succumb to death and dissolution. We know only the fringe of our entire being; we are not aware that it is only the mental being supported by the Psychic being in us that has the capacity to retain a sense of persistent personality through repeated births even though the physical body may perish. It has the capacity to bridge the gap of physical memory created by the death and birth of the body.

Thus in the third status of Life love and association became the guiding principles and survival of the race or

species was sought through mutual help, good fellowship, kindness and affection. For, which individuals and aggregates stood a better chance of survival than those well knit together by bonds of good fellowship, mutual interchange, love and unity? It was indeed the growing influence of Mind over material existence that substantially changed the entire outlook of individuals and aggregates, and it was found that it was more by self-giving and fusion with others that the individual and race could grow and endure.

Yet, it took some time for Life to abolish its law of desire, or, for love to outgrow its law of hunger and its demand on the object of love. With love attaining its true nature it was realised that "the joy of giving is equal to the joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater".¹ With the increasing predominance of mind, Life attempted to resolve the initial conflicts of unity in difference through the principles of love and association. This conflict first expressed itself in the urge of the atom to retain its distinctness and yet aggregate with others, and in the Will of the separate ego to guard its identity and yet gravitate towards others; the highest achievement of man in this direction has been an attempt to effect unity by association, fraternity and comradeship. But it is often community of interests or some temporary necessity that may bring together all varieties of persons and such associations do break

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXI, p. 247.

up as soon as the personal interests of the individuals forming a group militate against one another; even in such associations the accent is more on the difference than on the unity. Individuals and races come together to form associations for all kinds of purposes; they form associations not out of any inherent attraction for one another but with a view to serve some personal or group interest which it might be easier to achieve through associations than by individual efforts.

Perfect harmony can be achieved only in the Fourth status of Life, in a realisation of the essential unity of the One and the Many, the individual and the eternal, in short, "in the unity and freedom of the Spirit".¹

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXI, p. 249.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE

LET us remind ourselves of the trend of the creative movement of Sachchidananda who is the abiding reality behind all mundane appearances. The Spirit descends step by step and involves Itself in Matter and from Matter again starts the journey back till the Spirit recovers its plenitude through the process of evolution. In its descent It puts on veil upon veil till It completely conceals Itself under the thickest veil of Matter; in Its ascent it gradually removes from Itself one veil after another till It stands out in all its plenitude in Supramentality. It is a to and fro movement, a Play of Self-concealment and Self-recovery. What was involved must evolve and, the logic of the process demands that the stream of evolution will not stop here on the level of humanity; it has to flow on till there is the complete manifestation of the Spirit that was involved in Matter. Life was involved in Matter and Mind in Life, similarly, Supermind is involved in mind and it is going to manifest Itself on this earth by a complete transformation of the mental-vital-physical formation. This, in short, is the key to the enigma of creation.

In the meantime, during the course of descent and ascent of the Divine Supermind many problems have

been created which it is for the Supermind to solve. Mind, as we have already seen, is a distorted reflection of the Supermind, just as Life is a dark figure of Omnipotence. Hence though Life is the play of a universal Force it has not yet fully extricated itself from its imprisonment in Matter and, as such, it is a divided action of an undivided Force. It is due to this divided action that Life starts with many kinds of rigid divisions and distinctions, and although it has ascended step by step to the mental level, it is not yet free from the inherent incapacity of its material origin. Sachchidananda is the Reality behind the phenomenal world, and it is the Conscious-Force of Sachchidananda that has created the world movement. But on account of its exclusive concentration on division and distinction, this Conscious-Force brought up many problems for Life which it has to solve, so that, it can discover the hidden Truth and find the underlying unity when the world will no longer appear as a field for the clash of opposing forces.

In the last chapter we have seen how from a state of sub-merged consciousness in Matter, Life has mounted two steps, that is to say, it has taken two other expressions, the Vital and the Mental. But even at this third level when Life has emerged as mental sense and perception, it has evolved only as a divided or individual consciousness and, therefore beset with all the problems of a divided or fragmentary movement.

Though oblivious of his divine potentiality and tied down to a half ignorant mentality through the short

span of a divided existence, man feels an inner impulsion to exceed the present limitations of his mental-vital-physical being. He refuses to accept the present imperfections of his nature and existence as final. He refuses to equate his whole being with this physical-vital-mental formation. He tries to have comprehensive knowledge of Matter, Life and Mind, so that he can be master of these principles. He further seeks to know himself and through such knowledge seeks to know the world and become master of himself and his environment. This inner impulsion comes from the Lord seated in his heart and it is meant to lead him on to his divine destiny; man has to find the conditions that will make it possible for him to comply with this divine impulsion. Then and not till then can the human pilgrim rest in his journey; he has to push on to greater and greater heights till he reaches the summit—the level of Light and Deliverance—that beckons him again and again and towards which his inner impulsion is constantly leading him. Man is not the puny individual he seems to be on the surface, he has an immortal soul within him and a divine destiny which even now sends occasional glimpses through the chinks in the wall of his egoistic ignorance. Man is not the mere animal; he has a psychic part in him too which refuses to accept the present state of things as final and his divine dissatisfaction bears testimony to this constant urge of the psychic being within him to exceed his present limitations. And if man's littleness feels appalled at, or is unable to mount to the destined heights, he has got to

step out of the way and make room for a greater being, a being more puissant and dynamic who would respond to the call of the Divine Creator.

Let us now carefully examine the nature of life and the various problems that confront it. We are told that the Conscious-Force of Sachchidananda is a self-effectuating Force which has shaped this world and is a constituting force of every item of creation. We have however seen that though consciousness is said to be the constituting force of everything, its poise of expression varies according to the particular stage of evolution. Consciousness is not *fully* manifested in all the stages of evolution and therefore the *Force* of consciousness at a particular level will be according to the degree of manifestation of consciousness itself at that level, "for as the consciousness is, so will the Force be". As for instance, Fire has the power of burning; in point of fact wherever there is fire, there is its power of burning; but this power of burning is proportionate to the degree or volume of fire at a particular place; if at a particular place the flame of the fire is big, the conflagration arising out of it is bound to be extensive, and if at a particular place the fire is just a spark, its power of burning is proportionately reduced. Similarly, where Consciousness is infinite, in all its plenitude, its Force will be All-surpassing and vice versa.

The consciousness of Sachchidananda is infinite and therefore, the Force of the consciousness is infinite in its scope and resplendent in its power and self-knowledge; in material nature, on the other hand, consciousness is

completely submerged, self-oblivious, the Force of consciousness seems to be completely absent there and Matter, though instinct with the consciousness of the Divine Supermind, appears devoid of all force and mobility, inert and inconscient, driven by a blind force and mechanically fulfils itself through chance or accidents.

Where there is a partial emergence of consciousness, as in Life and Mind, out of a total denial as in Matter, the Force is limited and is the cause of all the clash of individual lives and the conflicts of a half-ignorant mind which embitters life's journey till a further emergence of consciousness reveals a unifying solution. And it will be on the next stage of emergence that consciousness will manifest itself as the Supermind which is in possession of the truth of the Eternal and the Individual, the Many and the One and the conflicts of a half-emerged consciousness will find their resolution in a multiple unity. Then "it will be a life", says Sri Aurobindo, "in which all the individuals live at once in themselves and in each other as one Conscious Being in many souls, one power of consciousness in many minds, one joy of force working in many lives, one reality of Delight fulfilling itself in many hearts and bodies."¹

In the meantime, owing to the partial emergence of consciousness and Force in man, the difficulties that confront him at the present status of mind and life are threefold; man does not know himself; he knows only his

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXII, p. 254, 255.

outer being which is composed of his surface mind, life and body and he is completely ignorant of the vast subconscious and subliminal self behind his surface consciousness. This outer being is only a small portion, a fraction, of his entire being and is unable to manage or control it. The sub-conscious and the subliminal parts being the bigger and more potent parts of ourselves govern the outer being and all its activities. Hence even in our conscious moments, in our feeling of freedom and self-mastery, we are merely instruments of the inconscient within us of which we are completely ignorant. It will be helpful to give here a short description of the bigger self stretching behind the threshold of our waking mind.

It is the jivatman that presides over every human individual and guides him towards his goal; it is termed the Central Being. But this guidance is done indirectly through its representatives at various levels of the human entity. This Jivatman is an eternal portion of the Divine and does not pass through evolution. The Psychic being is a representative of the Jivatman and passes through evolution; it is the Psychic Being that grows and becomes more and more powerful as it passes through repeated births and gathers experience. The Psychic being is said to be a divine effulgence and the representative of the Jivatman set to lead the individual through its indirect influence; it is also called the Inmost Being. The Psychic Being on its part acts upon our surface or Outer being, not directly but through its representatives, namely, the Mental Being, the Vital Being and the Physical Being.

In the outer being, however, the distinct and separate impulsions of the Mental, Vital and Physical beings are not felt distinctly, but they roll into one undifferentiated surface-awareness, we call mind, and which is completely ignorant of the depth and illumination behind it.

Man has to dive deep into the region behind the threshold of his surface-consciousness, that is to say, in his Inner being and Inmost being and ascend to the Central Being with a view to know himself fully and thereby become master of his own being. It is only by the going inside in search of the Lord seated in his heart that man will find the key to the solution of all the disharmonies of his life. He will find there his real Self and real unity.

The second difficulty with which man is confronted is that he does not know his fellow creatures also. Man knows his fellow beings from their actions and outward behaviour; but this is not true knowledge which comes from direct awareness or by conscious identity alone. We build our knowledge of the external world and of other human beings out of materials obtained through our senses; it is indirect knowledge. But we are directly aware of our own surface consciousness, of our essential existence; it is our consciousness itself that knows by identity that we are conscious; here there is no room for any guess or chance of possible mistake, for, it is by a conscious unity or oneness with myself that I am conscious of myself. Hence this is called direct knowledge or knowledge by identity; the knowledge

acquired by this method is superior to and is more reliable than all kinds of indirect knowledge, for obvious reasons. It is however difficult to have this kind of direct knowledge, or knowledge by identity, of our fellow creatures unless we can enter into conscious unity with them. This conscious unity is possible if we exceed our ego-centric existence and discover our real selves. From self-knowledge we can proceed to world-knowledge; an awareness of the truth of ourselves will extend to an awareness of the truth of the universal, when the One and the Many will stand explained to each other. But that awareness is superconscious to us as it is on the Supramental level alone that such awareness of a multiple unity is possible, "The Supermind alone commands Unity in diversity"¹, says Sri Aurobindo.

The Third difficulty that confronts man in his present state of consciousness and power is due to the division created by evolution and which still persists in him. Man is a physical-vital-mental formation and these three principles, namely, the body, life and mind are constantly at war with one another. The Life in its attempt to satisfy its desires and impulses, draws large drafts on the limited capacity of the body; the body, in its turn, incapable of satisfying the demands of Life is in constant revolt against the tyranny of Life. The mind is in constant war with both the members by turns. At one time it tries to save the body from the demands of life

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXII p. 258

and at another time it tries to harness life's dynamism to its own needs, and, life too resents its enslavement and misuse by mind. Thus, not only are these three members at constant war with each other but each tries to get the better of the other two or harness the other two to its own needs and impulses. It is beyond mind to resolve these conflicts among the different members and it tries to come to some compromise, and failing that, finds solace in the belief in the mortality of our being or looks forward to a happier existence hereafter. Mind does not know that these struggles are born out of the "aspiration of an immortal being in a mortal life and body"¹ and there is a constant urge from somewhere to exceed the capacities of the warring members.

This is not the end of the story. For, there is not only a constant division between these three principles, physical, vital, mental, but each one of them is divided against itself. The nature of this conflict will appear from the following.

In this chapter we have already described, in some details, the structure of our subliminal or Inner being of which our Outer being is not directly aware. There is a physical Purusha or instinctive soul, a vital Purusha or impulsive soul and a mental Purusha or emotional soul—Annamaya Purusha, Pranamaya Purusha and Manomaya Purusha—which are constantly pushing the physical-vital-mental formation to evolve from its present to a

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXII, p. 259

greater and greater capacity. But the actual capacity of our body is less than the capacity of the physical Purusha or instinctive soul, the capacity of our vital-force is less than the capacity of vital Purusha or impulsive soul behind and the capacity of our mental energy also is less than the capacity of the mental Purusha or emotional soul behind it. As a result of this great disparity between the respective capacities of the Inner and Outer beings the latter cannot satisfy the demands of the former. Constantly pushed by this triple soul and unable to comply with their constant urge to go forward and exceed the present incapacities, our Outer being is distracted and torn between the constant feuds of instinct with instinct, desires with desires, emotions with emotions and all the impulses of an imperfect nature. Thus blundering his way through all these conflicts, born out of his egoistic ignorance, man fails to find any unifying solution. In his calmer moments man becomes acutely conscious of all these discords of life and seeks a harmony between the warring members of his own being as a result of a divided consciousness and Force. The more he develops as a self-conscious and thinking being, the more insistent becomes the demand upon man to find a solution of all the besetting problems of life.

Yes, man has to find out the solution. He is enamoured of a Beyond to which his ignorance prevents him from going forward; he gets glimpses of that Truth even through the fissures in the wall of ignorance round him. It is by self-enlargement and by recovering his Universal Self

that man can become or feel himself as one with all his fellow beings and thereby see the end of all his conflicts of life. There is an eternal Spirit overhead, Jivatman, that presides over the Soul's terrestrial adventure and it is there that man has to seek the Light that will dispel the gloom and ignorance of his egoistic nature. This state has already been described in the last chapter as the Fourth Status of Life to which life has still to ascend in its progress towards Divinity.

Unless man's littleness is appalled by the Wideness and Grandeur of the Heights he has to attain and is prepared to stand aside; he has to go forward and aspire to the ascent. Sri Aurobindo said "his glory is that he is the closed place and secret workshop of a living labour in which Supermanhood is being made ready by a Divine Craftsman". He has to exceed the mind which is only a clumsy interlude between Inconscience and Superconscient action of the Divine Creator.

Thus man has to fulfil his destiny by surrendering himself to the travailing Mother whose Love and Illumination will lead him to the supramental Unity, the last stage of his Soul's terrestrial adventure.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DOUBLE SOUL IN MAN

IN a previous chapter we have seen the gradual ascent of Life from rigid divisions of Matter to its present level. At the very first stage it expresses itself as a blind action of energy which is the basis of all movements in the material world. This is what is termed the Material expression of Life. This energy, though apparently without any conscious guidance, evolved order out of chaos and brought the world to its present shape. At the second stage, what we called the Vital expression of Life, there was a gradual emergence of consciousness and the impelling force behind all activities seemed to be desire, a vital craving and a struggle to expand and possess with a very limited capacity for its task, and, at the third stage, that is to say, at the stage of the Mental expression of Life, the guiding force is Love which seeks to possess and be possessed, to receive and to give itself—when “the joy of giving is equal to the joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater”¹. The fourth stage has yet to be reached—“as the pure and full emergence of the original Will”²—and that will be the foundation of the Supramental existence.

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXI, p. 247

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXIII, p. 263.

What is it that this gradual ascent of Life indicates? It will appear that the gradual ascent of Life from the original condition of Matter to its present level indicates nothing else than the ascent of the Divine Delight in creation from its rigid absorption in Matter to its very opposite, namely, "its luminous consummation in Spirit"¹ and this is going to be the Fourth stage. It is the soul's quest to find the individual and universal Delight of Things, and every progress, every movement leads towards it. It is a process through which order evolved out of chaos, hunger and devouring gradually yielded place to Love and the joy of self-giving.

Sachchidananda is the abiding Reality behind this world; Sachchidananda was completely involved in Matter and a gradual emergence of That which was involved through a slow and difficult process of evolution is the mystery of the world process. Life is nothing else than an energy of His Conscious-Force and *as such* Life can seek to establish nothing else than Divine Bliss. The whole world is instinct with the Delight of Sachchidananda though for a time we miss It on account of our egoistic ignorance. The Conscious-Force of the All-Delight is not divorced from the Delight itself and if Life, as we have seen, is the energy of the Conscious-Force of this All-Delight, it is a self-evident truth that the ascent of Life can only mean ascent of Delight; the gradual release of Life from its absorption in Matter can only indicate the gradual

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXIII p. 264

outflowering of Divine Bliss and Ananda from its self-imprisonment in Matter. "To seek for Delight is therefore the fundamental impulse and sense of Life; to find and possess and fulfil it is its whole motive"¹.

In a previous chapter we have been told of a fourfold principle of Divine Being creative of the Universe, namely, Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind; these are veiled behind the cosmos. Each of these divine terms is omnipresent in the material cosmos and during the course of its gradual manifestation on the earth, each one of them is secretly operating from behind the veil of the phenomenal world through its subordinate term. For instance, Supermind is acting through its distorted reflection, the mind, Conscious-Force is operative in this world through its subordinate terms, Life; we shall also find in a subsequent chapter that Matter is a subordinate term of the Divine All-Existence. Thus, the three Divine principles, namely, Supermind, Conscious-Force and Existence are working sub-rosa through their subordinate terms, Matter, Life and Mind. Similarly, the principle of Divine Bliss is also omnipresent in the cosmos and, as such, it must be also manifesting itself through a subordinate principle of its own.

It is the Psychic principle which is the representative in us of the Divine Bliss, just as Mind, Life and Matter are respectively the distorted or partial expressions of Supermind, Conscious-Force and the Existentiality of

¹ *The Life Divine* Vol. I, Chapter XXIII p. 264

Brahman. We are however not at all in conscious touch with this Psychic term in us. All our mental and physical activities, our hopes and fears, our achievements and frustrations inhere in our ego which seems to us to be the centre of our individuality. But ego or the Desire Soul, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, is the outward and partial reflection of the Psychic being in us which is the real centre of our individualisation, the real Person in us. Thus we have a double soul in us; one is the Psychic Being which is subliminal to our surface consciousness and the other is termed the Desire soul. We have similarly two minds, two lives and two bodies; it is said that every cosmic principle in us is double; all that it means is that the original Divine Principles are working from behind the veil, through their subordinate terms, in our outer being. A passing reference to the several parts of our Being will clarify this point. Outwardly we are a physical-vital-mental formation and it is our feeling that we are just a physical body with certain vital and mental impulses. We have a surface awareness of things and we do not know what, if anything, lies beneath the threshold of this surface-consciousness of ours. Thus shut up within our surface-consciousness, we are not aware of the vastness and illumination that lie behind it. It is only our outer being, composed of the body, life and surface mind, that we are aware of. Behind it there is our Inner being composed of the mental Purusha, the vital Purusha and the physical Purusha; behind the Inner being there is the Psychic Being or the Inmost Being. The Psychic

Being is called the Inmost Being as it supports all the other beings, mental, vital and physical and is also the basis of this superficial formation. All these beings again are the representatives of our Central Being or Jivatman which presides over each human individual. This Central being is eternally free and does not descend into evolution but it posts its representatives at various levels of the human consciousness to help its progress. The Inmost being and the Inner being are the projections of the Central Being through which it controls lives in lower nature. This is a more or less overall picture of the several levels of the human consciousness—the Psychic being is behind our surface-consciousness and its seat is behind the region of the heart.

This body, life and mind, with which alone we are at present familiar, compose only our superficial self—our egoistic existence—whereas the subliminal mental, vital and physical being, supported by the Psychic being are the formations of our larger and true individuality. The surface formation has a very limited capacity of living, knowing or having little or no taste of the real Delight of Existence. All its activities are “cabined between the narrow boundaries of our physical births and deaths”. But the subliminal parts of our being have far greater powers. The subliminal Mind, Life and Physicality are open to the universal knowledge of the Cosmic Mind, to the universal Force of Cosmic Life and the universal Force-formation of Cosmic Matter. We are accustomed to identify our mind with our superficial

consciousness; but our mind is only the human range of consciousness and there is much above and below this human range of consciousness with which our normal mind has ordinarily no contact. Similarly, there is the Psychic Being or the Anandamaya Purusha, as we may call it, that supports all our outer formations, takes delight in all the varied experiences of the surface mind, pleasant painful or neutral, and enables us to persist through life; the Psychic Being sees the *Rasa* behind all the experiences of life and it is open to the universal Delight in things. It has its distorted reflection in the Desire soul which is bound up within the walls of egoistic ignorance and is unable to have any touch with the Divine Cosmic Delight. Besides, the Psychic Being acts upon the outer formation as an 'influence' rather than by its sovereign right of direct action. Its direct action becomes normal and preponderant only at a high stage of development.

The Desire soul on account of its wrong reception of the experiences of life, fails to see the *Rasa* of things and, as such, all its experiences resolve themselves into these three terms, namely, pleasure, pain and indifference. But the subliminal soul or the Psychic Being responds to the *Rasa* in all experiences alike and takes equal delight in all things and happenings. Our births have a divine significance, and the advent of man upon this earth is the soul's terrestrial adventure; at first a feeble spark of the Divine, it has to proceed from strength to strength, growing all the time by all kinds of experiences through repeated births till it becomes fully awake in the human

individual able to act overtly and lead it straight and unerringly towards his divine destiny. In the meantime it has to act from behind the veil through its subordinate term the Desire soul, which is not able to take an equal delight in all experiences.

There must be impersonality and freedom from all attachments before pain can be eliminated from life's experiences. The philosophic attitude is said to be a certain detachment from mundane hopes and fears. In art and science impersonality is the essential condition of success. A scientist with a personal obsession cannot be expected to achieve much. A scientist with a completely impersonal attitude of mind is not in any way affected by the results of his investigation and he can always take a personal-impersonal delight in events however poignant they may be to other interested persons. We love to witness dramas with tragic endings that evoke the most poignant emotions and find an equal delight in all the painful scenes that may be enacted before us. There may be actually all the physical symptoms of pain, tears may roll down our cheeks as we witness the drama but in spite of this we run to witness the poignant scenes again and again, because it is in a state of complete mental detachment that we witness the play and therefore find the *Rasa* behind the mournful scenes; we look on in a thoroughly impersonal attitude. Thus in every case the more detached we can be the less would be our suffering, and a state of complete impersonality would take delight in events which are otherwise savage, terrible

and repellant. This point has been dealt in extenso in a previous chapter and it will appear that there is no inevitability even in physical suffering.

Thus the Psychic Being or *Caitya Purusha*—the luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance—is our real Self. It is the being that has been referred to in the Gita as the Ishwara seated in the human heart. It is an indestructible spark of the Divine Effulgence, endures through births, untouched by death and supports the outer formation of our being. It is this Psychic Being, the inmost inhabitant of our heart, that is to develop our mind, life and body as proper instruments for its self-expression. It is commissioned to lead man from Ignorance to Knowledge; but at the outset it is weak and unable to exert any direct action on our surface nature, and so long as it is weak and ill-developed, it is the Desire soul or the pseudo-psychic entity that reigns on our outer consciousness and misinterprets the Psychic suggestions that come from behind. It is only when the Psychic Person comes to the front, takes control of our entire surface formation and begins to govern overtly that our progress becomes uninterrupted and our whole nature can be turned towards the ultimate aim of life, the ascent unto Spiritual existence. In whatever position we may hold a lighted candle, upside down or otherwise, its flame will always turn upwards; similarly, the person in whom the Psychic Being is fully awake and has taken complete control of his outer nature will always turn towards the Divine in whatever environment he might be placed. For, the Psychic

Being, an eternal portion of the Divine, always turns towards Truth, Light and the Divine. It is the awakening of the Psychic Being that is the real cause of man's turning to spiritual life.

The first step, then, towards the Supreme Victory would be the Psychic transformation, when the Psychic being comes to the front, takes control of our outer nature and is enthroned there in place of the ego.

The next step forward will be the spiritual transformation which will be followed by the third and last step of Supramental transformation; this will be the glorious end and consummation of man's spiritual endeavours. It will dispel every shade of ignorance by a complete transformation of the entire being and resolve all conflicts of life into the harmony of the Spirit.

The Psychic Being will then stand completely revealed as our true self, the real centre of our individualisation and it will recast all human experiences of pain and pleasure into terms of the Divine Ananda.

In the meantime it has to act, as I said, *sub-rosa*, behind the veil through its subordinate term, the Desire soul.

CHAPTER XXIV

MATTER

At the very outset, the body, life and mind, the three terms which seem to be the components of the human individual, looked like insurmountable obstacles to the attainment of Divine Life on earth. As a matter of fact they seemed to be the very opposite of the condition we envisage as Divine Life. In some previous chapters we have seen how mind and life are subordinate terms of the divine principles of Supermind and Conscious-Force. We have also seen that a fourfold principle of Divine Being creative of the universe, namely, Existence, Conscious-Force, Bliss and Supermind are veiled behind the cosmos and they are secretly operating from behind the veil of this phenomenal world through their subordinate terms. Mind and life are veiled figures, respectively, of the Divine Supermind and Consciousness-Force which are in the course of manifestation; they are the two frontal aspects of the said divine principles, and *as such*, they are not insurmountable obstacles to Divine Life as was originally supposed.

We shall similarly find that Matter is also a subordinate term of the Divine All-Existence and it would be no more insurmountable an obstacle on the path of the human traveller to his divine destiny than the other

terms of mind and life. Life is a mighty pulsation of the Divine All-Existence, and it is gradually evolving out of its imprisonment in Matter, as Mind is gradually elevating itself in its search of its own truth under the impulsion of the Divine Supermind.

The progress of Life and Mind towards their self-enlargement is however conditioned by their encasement in a physical body. We should however note that the stuff which is the material constituent of the human body does no longer look as gross as it used to do at the very inception of this world. It looked so crude and gross before Mind and Life were born out of it; it has been gradually transformed to the extent necessary to make it a fit habitation for the mental principle at its present stage of development. Our material body has now developed the complexities of a brain capable of receiving a progressive mental illumination, and these are the distinctive achievements that mark the progress of man over sheer animality. And it will be on his capacity to further transform the body so as to make it a fit instrument to receive a higher illumination, that the chances of a Divine Life on earth, depend. If the body cannot be made a divine instrument fit to hold a divine principle, then the earthly being will be able to realise Sachchidananda only by abolishing its mind, life and body and a Divine Life has to be sought elsewhere. Indeed so general and widespread has been the condemnation of the body as the greatest stumbling-block to the Soul's progress, that most religious opinions could only

think of an escape from the tortures of the flesh to an eternal annihilation. Body is the source of all sorrows and sufferings, they maintained; a resigned temporary endurance of physical life was considered to be the test of religiosity.

This quarrel with the body had its inception long before man woke to his spiritual possibilities. Life had its quarrel with matter and the appearance of Mind deepened the conflict; we have seen in a previous chapter how each of the different members, life, mind and the body has been constantly quarrelling with the others with a view to establish its sway over the others. When man hears the call of the Beyond and gets even a fleeting experience of the delight of spiritual experience, this feud becomes intense and "war is declared between the Spirit and its instruments",¹ namely, the body, life and mind. And finally, the victory of the soul is sought by cutting itself adrift from its disabling encasement and by a total rejection of the physical, vital and mental principles.

But this escape of the soul from its outer instrumentation of the body, life and mind is no solution. It means the soul's rejection of the task which the Spirit took upon itself when It descended to creation and plunged into its own shadow. Sri Aurobindo does not accept the above solution as final and inevitable. According to him, the fourfold divine principles of Existence, Con-

sciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind are involved behind cosmos, and they are in the course of gradual manifestation through the process of evolution; ignorance, incapacity and suffering are therefore bound to intervene at a certain stage of the evolution of the Spirit involved in Matter. Thus, the present limitations of the mind, life and body are no more than the conditions necessary at the present stage of the manifestation of the Spirit. They have to be exceeded, not 'annulled' in proceeding to the next higher stage of evolution. Each one of them is a subordinate term, a veiled expression of a divine principle and is capable of revealing the divine truth that is lying concealed behind it. Like Life and Mind, Matter is also a veiled expression of a divine principle which is now working from behind the cosmos. Hence there is no reason why we should succumb to a sense of frustration owing to the present incapacities of the flesh; we have to find out the truth about Matter as we found the truth about Mind and Life.

What then is the ultimate truth about Matter? It is extremely interesting to note, at the outset, how our conception of Matter has gradually changed in recent years; it seems that we know little or nothing about the real reality of Matter. There was a time when 'matter' was supposed to be an object of certain knowledge, directly seizeable by the senses, unlike the Spirit which ever remains in the region of mere speculation. The materialist therefore preferred to delight in his certain knowledge of Matter instead of roving in the sphere of doubtful

speculation about the Spirit. But the investigations of modern science have entirely changed the aspect; for, science has revealed that what we seem to know directly is not Matter in itself but only some of its properties! Science has revealed that matter resolves itself into forms of energy, and even what appears to our senses as solid blocks of matter are really the conglomeration of millions of electrons and protons which just give us an appearance of solidity. Various theories had passed current about the forms of matter. According to Berkeley, "Matter is a cluster of ideas", that is to say, matter is co-extensive with our representation of it; it is said to have no interior, it hides nothing, contains nothing else than what is presented to our senses and so on. It has also been opined that sense-mind creates the material forms which it seems to perceive and thought-mind works upon the forms which the sense-mind presents to it.

All these explanations do not reveal the truth about Matter. "Earth-existence cannot be the result of the human mind which is itself the result of earth-existence", says Sri Aurobindo. It has been asserted that Matter is the creation of consciousness, but it will have to be explained how consciousness created matter as the basis of this cosmos. We have to seek an explanation in another direction.

There is the One without a second, and that One is no other than Brahman or Sachchidananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The one Consciousness is also a Force and whatever movements we find in the world,

whatever activities we come across are due to this Conscious-Force which has created the world. Again, Sachchidananda being the sole Reality the Form of this world must have been made out of the being or substance of that one Reality, or in other words, Sachchidananda is both the efficient as also the material cause of this universe; it is the Conscious-Force of Brahma that initiates the creative movement and it is out of the substance of Brahma that the material basis of creation must have been made. We have also seen that the Divine principles of Existence, Conscious-Force, Bliss, with Supermind as the nodus of creation, are so many aspects of the One Reality, Brahman, and they cannot be divorced from the Being of Brahman, as Fire cannot be divorced from its power of burning. As Brahman is gradually manifesting Himself through the process of evolution, each one of the aforesaid aspects of Brahman namely, Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind, is working through a subordinate principle with a view to its complete manifestation. We have seen in previous chapters how Supermind is working through its frontal aspect, Mind, Consciousness-Force through Life, and the Delight or Bliss of Sachchidananda has its divine representative in the human heart, the Psychic Being, which works through the Desire soul in front. Similarly, Existentiality or the substance of Brahman must be working behind some subordinate principle or Form and that can be no other than Matter; the pure and subtle substance of Brahman gradually pur-

on the cloak of grossness as Sachchidananda descended into creation.

It has already been stated in a previous chapter that out of the infinite potentialities of Sachchidananda one order of Truth, namely the Many, has been cast out for manifestation by the creative principle, Supermind; for the manifestation of the Many, Consciousness descended through Supermind to infinite divisions and distinctions, and as a result of the dividing action of the Overmind, we see Mind and Life separated from their sources and they are distorted reflections respectively of the Supermind and the Consciousness-Force. Life even appeared as an inconscient force working blindly in material nature. Similarly, Matter is the final form taken by the Conscious Being as the result of the aforesaid dividing action of Universal Mind or Overmind. Matter, then, is really the very substance of the Conscious Being, and its inconscience is only a mask which hides behind it the Glory and Effulgence of the Spirit.

Next, we have to clear one more point before we can be assured of the real Reality of Matter. Let us concede that as the Existent had to appear before us, spread out or manifest Itself, it had to put on some form and that Matter is the Form that the Existent has taken for Its Self-manifestation. But it may be pertinently asked, why the Indivisible Existence submits Itself to this pragmatic division, and why should the subtle substance of the the Supreme Divine put on such grossness and inertia and subject Itself to all the disabilities of material subs-

tance? For, it has to be admitted that it is the grossness of Matter that is the greatest handicap to our progress; besides being a great hindrance to our sadhana, the make-up of this gross corporal frame is responsible for a large portion of the poignant sufferings of life. Why could not Matter or the material Form be made to put on a less rigid aspect than what it has done, why could not the body be made a little more subtle and flexible so as to be able to absorb, without pain, the blows and buffets of earthly life? In short, why could not the Lord make the physical conditions a little more bearable than what they are today?

We have to find answers to the above questions in the light of what we conceive to be the original scheme of creation. We have been told that out of the infinite potentialities of Sachchidananda, only one order of Truth, Multiplicity, has been selected and cast out for manifestation by the Supermind; and it is not in a subtle form but in a condition of utter grossness and rigidity that infinite multiplicity is possible. The more subtle is a body, the less capable is it of rigid divisions and even such material principles as air, water, and so on, are not capable of rigid divisions. It is the grossness of material form that admits of rigid divisions and distinctions. The division that started from the stage of the apprehending consciousness of the Supermind had its final denouement in gross materiality with its infinite divisions and distinctions; there are innumerable atoms behind the apparently solid blocks of matter, each divided from and refusing

fusion with the other—thus it is that the original scheme of creation has been brought to its utmost logical consequence. That is why the Spirit descended to such gross materiality and now from that state of self-involvement in Matter the Spirit is releasing Itself through a difficult process of evolution. "It is a necessary result "says Sri Aurobindo, "of the Will to make multiplicity of Being and an awareness of things from separate centres of consciousness the first method of this lower experience of existence."¹

This then is the reality about Matter. For its creation, an infinite fragmentation of the Infinite's Substance was needed as its basis. By a conceptive self-extension of His own Being Matter was formed as an object of consciousness and it is composed of infinite divisions. In a sense the Divine consciousness plunged into its apparent opposite—Superconscience to Inconscience—and It is now slowly but steadily recovering Itself through the apparent opposites of the original conditions of creation, namely, from immobility to mobility, from inanimation to animation, from vitality to mentality and this process will not stop till Supramentality becomes the dominant principle here on earth. Matter then is nothing else than an aspect of Sachchidananda and it holds within itself as its own reality, Consciousness, in a state of complete self-absorption.

The Physical principle should therefore be considered

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXIV, p. 286.

as no more insurmountable an obstacle to Divine Life on earth than the Mental or the Vital principles, the truth of which we have already discussed in previous chapters.

CHAPTER XXV

THE KNOT OF MATTER

WE have seen in the previous chapter that there is no fundamental reality in the sharp division which seems to exist between Spirit and Matter. "Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit".¹ In fact, in spite of the great disparity that appears to exist between them, Matter and Spirit are not irreconcilable opposites. Whatever the appearance on the surface, this world is not a constant struggle between irreconcilable opposites. There is a secret Consciousness and Will which is the impulsion behind the phenomenal world and which is constantly reconciling all kinds of disparates with a view to an ultimate harmony. Matter is the form taken by the substance of Brahman, as already explained in the last chapter. Brahman is the sole Reality and the material and stimulating cause of this world. Matter is "only a final form and objective aspect of the Divine Existence with all of God ever present in it and behind it."²

Substance may be of different degrees of subtlety. We see the substance of Matter, this crude and gross form which is seizable by our senses; similarly there is

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXV, p. 292.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXV, p. 292.

substance of Mind which is a much subtler material out of which mental forms and pictures are woven, our purely mental formulations are made out of it. There may be substance of pure life-energy; this cannot be felt by the physical senses. Similarly, there is a pure substance of the Spirit, seizable not by our ordinary mental perception but is present to the self-awareness of the Timeless and Spaceless Itself, at one extremity, and this gross substance we call Matter at the other extremity and seizable by our senses—they are in fact the two poles of the same Reality.

Now, conceding all that is being claimed for it, material life seems so much the negation of all spiritual existence that a rejection of all kinds of materiality seems to be the shortest cut out of the trammels of earthly existence. Indeed matter seems to be the cause of a very large portion of man's sufferings, and circumscribed as they are by a material body, Mind and Life seem to be very much crippled and far removed from their original vastness and freedom. And in this view of the world the exclusive spiritual seeker has every justification for seeking to break away from the meshes of matter, life and mind with a view to return to the Silence of the Spirit as the consummation of his spiritual endeavours. But Sri Aurobindo says that there is no inevitability in such a decision nor does it display an integral and ultimate wisdom. Instead of cutting ourselves away from this divine order of the universe, we see before us, and seeking release in an immobile Silence, we should pause

and ponder if there is any other exit out of this apparent tangle of Matter. Let us therefore examine the various difficulties that Matter seems to throw on our way and see if they are insurmountable or it is possible to exceed them.

In a previous chapter we have seen how on account of an exclusive concentration on a particular subject a person forgets, for the time being, every other thing; the more engrossed he can be in a particular book or a particular subject the more completely can he become ignorant of all other matters for the time being; the rest of his knowledge, as it were, recedes to the background and his entire consciousness is focussed for the time being on the particular subject of his preoccupation. Similarly a man absorbed in a game of chess, for example, concentrates so exclusively on the game that he forgets for the time being everything else in the world including perhaps his own identity. This temporary ignorance is not a negation of knowledge, for, the rest of his knowledge is gathered behind the focus of his consciousness and as soon as he withdraws from his concentration in the book or the game, as the case may be, he becomes fully aware of the rest of his knowledge. Similarly in its exclusive concentration on multiplicity, Spirit is completely absorbed in Matter which is the culmination of the principle of ignorance. In reality Matter is instinct with the Divine Consciousness of which it is a mask but the Form in which Matter is presented to our consciousness offers serious impediments to our progress. It is

the grossness of our material body that besieges our aspirations and our spiritual endeavours.

The "pitiless miracle" of this material universe, says Sri Aurobindo is that mind and life have emerged from what appears to be their antithesis. And "out of this heartless Inconscience and within its rigorous jurisdiction hearts have been born and aspire and we are tortured and bleed under the weight of the blind and insentient cruelty of this iron existence, a cruelty which lays its law upon them and becomes sentient in their sentience, brutal, ferocious, horrible."¹ It is this process through which Consciousness which had completely involved Itself in Matter is slowly and painfully extricating Itself from Its self-imprisonment. In the meantime Mind has to obey a law which imposes upon it ignorance and limitation at every step.

Secondly, Matter is chained by a fixed and mechanical law to which all its movements are bound. This bondage of Matter to mechanical laws seems to be the second fundamental opposition that Matter offers to Spirit which is for ever free and limitless. In response to the ceaseless efforts of Life to establish itself in the physical form and prevent disintegration and of Mind to release itself from its bondage of Matter, Nature yields up to a point; but it is only a partial victory that is achieved, for, ere long Nature cries a halt to the progress of Life and Mind and draws a rigid line of obstruction

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXV, p. 294.

and inertia which they are not allowed to cross. The result is, "Error ever pursues its knowledge, darkness is inseparably the companion and background of its light".¹ The truth of this saying is evident in every walk of life and in every branch of human knowledge. The obstinate inertia of matter prevents the conquest of the Ignorance and the brute force that is the power of the ignorance. Thus frustrated, the quest of Life and Mind has to continue.

Whenever we stop to find out the cause of the various frustrations that beset our lives, we are faced with the *third* fundamental opposition which Matter offers to the Spirit. We have seen in a previous chapter that Matter is a subordinate principle of the existentiality or substance of Sachchidananda; it is indivisible in reality, but in the form in which it is presented to our consciousness it is the culmination of the principle of division and distinction. We have also seen how division is the whole basis of action in material nature. Each of the millions and millions of atoms that constitute matter tends to maintain its separate individuality. Atoms may aggregate by retaining their separateness, but they are unwilling to unite; there may be union by the other method of destruction of one unit by another. We have also seen the manner of the first appearance of the vital principle in matter, when life accepted the law of death desire and limitation and attempted to maintain itself by mutual

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXV, p. 296.

devouring. Even with the manifestation of the Mental principle, Mind has to bow down to the yoke of Matter and work under the limiting conditions of division and ignorance. That is why mental knowledge is never free from doubts and denials nor do its efforts make any certain and assured progress.

These are not all. The ignorance and suffering to which Life and Mind are subject would have been less intolerable if they were not aware of them; the vital principle would not have been dissatisfied if it were inert, it would not be straining at its leash if it were not aware of its infinite power. If man could live, like the lower animals, in a world of placid contentment, blissfully ignorant of his divine destiny, much of the edge would have been taken off the poignant experiences of his life. Awakened to the limitations of his present existence, man feels the impulsion for exceeding his present bondage and for proceeding towards the Infinite and the Eternal. Behind the threshold of his surface-consciousness, man becomes vaguely aware of a divine presence. It is this knowledge or experience that makes the discords of his life too painful to be borne with contentment. And he can never rest satisfied unless he can reconcile these apparent contradictions, his present incapacity and the stirrings of an Infinite within. For, "He is the first son of earth who becomes vaguely aware of God within him, of his immortality or his need of immortality, and this knowledge is a whip that drives and a cross of crucifixion until he is able to

turn it into a source of infinite light and joy and power".¹

Consciousness that was involved in Matter has only partially emerged in the human mind, which is said to be the middle term. This partial emergence would have grown into a complete emergence in course of time without any let or hindrance but for the aforesaid triple defects of the natural being. Each human individual is cooped up within the four walls of his egoistic ignorance; each has only a limited Conscious-Force and each is exposed to the attack, impact and forceful contact of other limited individuals who are similarly groping in ignorance and division. These conditions compel him to undergo all the sufferings and pain which he is sometimes hardly able to bear with complacence. His knowledge is limited and uncertain and incapable of helping him to steer clear of the strifes and discords that assail him at every step; as a result, the law of division gives rise to inevitable reactions in the mind such as, grief and joy, love and hatred, oppression and depression.

All these are no doubt the negation of Ananda, and if they be insuperable then indeed all attempts to seek satisfaction of the Spirit upon earth is a vain delusion. In point of fact, this view of things is the basis of all the pessimistic theories of the world. It maintains that the very nature of material existence is division and ignorance which is the cause of all our sufferings. Therefore, it is

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXV, p. 299.

futile to expect Freedom and Ananda within the shackles of this body, Life and mind—The Infinite can only recover Itself by rejecting as an error and a false step, its attempt to find Itself in the finite”.¹

It is said that the principle of division is a creation of Mind. It was an all-dividing Mind that was said to have concealed itself behind material existence and an all-dividing Life-Force is carrying out the conceptions of the all-dividing Mind. In this view of the subject, if Mind is the first principle of creation which veiled itself behind Matter then the emergence of Mind can be the ultimate attainment possible in creation; for according to this view what was involved has already evolved. There is therefore no reason to expect that with the emergence of Mind the division and ignorance, which is its very nature, will ever disappear from the face of the earth. All attempts to exceed the present limitations therefore are bound to be futile and salvation has necessarily to be sought elsewhere.

The whole question will take an entirely different aspect if It is the Infinite Spirit, and not an all-dividing Mind, that involved Itself behind Matter. If It is a Supramental Being that put on this robe of materiality, then with the emergence of Mind the curtain has not been rung down on this drama of creation. There is no compelling reason why the stream of evolution should stop here at this level. The next divine principle is yet to emerge and it will not

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXV, p. 301.

be impossible for It to impose a higher law on this our physical-vital-mental formation, to transform all the discords of life into an eternal harmony.

There is no reason to suppose that the evolving Supramental Being that would liberate the mind from its present knot of divided existence would not impose on the bodily existence a higher law than the present one of death, division and mutual devouring. If, as we have seen before, Matter is a veiled expression of the Divine substance, there is no reason to suppose why the Supramental Being will not be able to remove the mask of inertia and obstruction from the face of Matter and make the body a proper habitation of the Spirit for the joy of the Infinite in the finite. Matter has already undergone substantial changes from its original condition. Matter which constitutes the human body, for instance, does not wear the look of such gross materiality as it appeared at the inception of this world, and there is no reason to suppose that this material body will not undergo further transformation so as to be a proper receptacle of the Supramental Light.

In short, the whole problem boils down to this: if, as we have supposed, all the incapacities of matter are due to the self-imposed limitations by the Divine upon His own substance for the Delight of creation, then there is no difficulty in accepting the view that it is possible for the Divine to remove the present limitations from material existence so as to make a divine use of mind and life and body upon this earth. If, on the other hand, it is supposed that the present laws of material

nature with which we are now familiar represent the only possible relations between sense and substance, then we have to turn away from the unconquered and unconquerable material principle and seek our freedom from limitation elsewhere, in some other than the terrestrial plane.

There does not seem to be any compelling reason, however, to accept the limiting conclusion as final. Even here, as we have found, there are other states of Matter, a gradation, which indicates that it is possible for Matter to exceed its present limitations and transform itself under a higher law which is latent in it.

Chapter XXVI

THE ASCENDING SERIES OF SUBSTANCE

IF we stop to consider for a while, what is the most essential property of Matter, we shall see that it is the property of solidity,—a firm response to the touch of sense that seems to make a substance material. Whatever may be its other properties, and they are several, a substance seems to be material to us in proportion to its capacity of presenting solid resistance to touch. And conversely, a substance seems to be less material in proportion as it is less resistant and more subtle. On account of this solid resistance durable forms of Matter have been possible on which our consciousness can dwell. It is again this resistance to touch that makes an object real to us; let us take an ordinary illustration: supposing we suddenly come upon a person who has been previously reported to be dead; after we get over our first shock of surprise, before accepting the person to be real and living and not an apparition, our first impulse is to touch him with a view to be assured that his body offers resistance to touch, his form is durable and gross and not subtle and evanescent, as these are, to us, the tests of reality. And this attitude of our mind towards matter, namely, accepting its solidity and capacity of resistance to touch as the test of its reality, is precisely the symbol of

the essential object for which the Pure substance of the Spirit has passed into what we call the material status. Hence touch or contact is for us the essential basis of sense experience, for all other physical senses are based more or less on subtle or indirect contacts between the percipient and the object of perception. In the Sankhya there is a classification of the five elemental states of substance indicating a progression from the more subtle to the less subtle, from Ether to Earth and Matter is the last stage of pure substance in its descent to gross images, mutual impenetrability and so on, which are some of the characteristics of matter. Intrinsically, Matter is of the same substance as Spirit, the one is gross and the other subtle, they are the two ends of one Reality. Matter is the form to which the pure substance of the Spirit has gradually descended with a view to make infinite division and multiplicity possible. In short, matter is the "formula of accomplished divisibility".¹

If the pure substance of the Spirit has thus gradually assumed the grossness of Matter there must be an ascending series, a gradation so to speak, from the gross materiality to the pure substance of the Spirit. And in that gradation there is bound to be a gradual diminution of the distinctive properties of matter, namely, solidity, resistance to touch, impenetrability and so on and a progressive increase of the opposite characteristics, namely, subtlety, intangibility, interpenetration, power

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVI, p. 305.

of variation of form and so on. The Conscious-Force by exclusive concentration has so massed Itself in Matter that the latter seems to be composed of solid blocks with durable forms standing out against and resisting similar other blocks of the same force. And between these two extremes, namely, the substance of the Pure Spirit and the grossness and solidity of matter, there is likely to be an infinite gradation; for the Spirit did not descend to matter abruptly but put on this cloak of inconscience and impenetrability by a gradual process of involution.

The significance of the aforesaid state of things is of very great importance when we consider the possibility of a gradual evolution of a divinely human body upon this earth. Beseiged by all the incapacities of the physical frame and constantly assailed by death, division and the multiple conflicts of life, the prospects of a Divine Life on earth would indeed seem to be extremely lean if the present yoke of Matter were a permanent blight upon this earth. But cosmic Nature has other rhythms and there is a law of the higher worlds which is capable of removing the various imperfections which now seem to be the portion of material existence.

In this world too, Matter is not always of the same degree of density or impenetrability. If we accept the view of the old Indian Physicists we will find how out of the elementary stage of pure material extension in space all forms of matter are built; how from an ethereal subtlety of material substance this earth substance, which is the basis of all sensible experience, has been formed.

There is also an ascending series in Matter which leads us from the more to the less dense. Matter, as we have seen, is the last result of a gradual involution of the pure substance of the Spirit; here Spirit loses Itself in a sleep of inconscience. There are then different grades between the inconscient substance of the Spirit, that is Matter, and the Pure Substance of the Spirit. In the ascending series there are more and more subtle formulations of the substance of the Spirit as vehicles for the self-expression of Life, Mind, Supermind, Sachchidananda. That is to say, in this world material substance is the basis of everything. The senses, for instance, works through physical instruments, the Life works through a nervous system and other vital organs; the Mind has to function in a physical body and to rely for its thought and other activities on data brought in by the physical instrumentation. Thus we see that Matter is the dominant principle in this world and the characteristic vehicle for the expression of Life and Mind and for gathering sense experience; these physical organs are no more the creators of sense-perceptions than the cortex is the creator of thought and as such there is no compelling reason why the sense, life and mind should be circumscribed by Matter. It is for the need of the Spirit to evolve in a world of Matter and for that purpose to create solid and durable forms that the pure substance of the Spirit put on this aspect of gross materiality.

Similarly, in the next grade, that is to say, in the world beyond this material plane, the substance of the Spirit

is less dense and more subtle and, therefore, it is not a plane of substantial and durable forms like those of this terrestrial plane; in that plane solidity and resistance to touch is not the test of reality. For, the dominant principle and the characteristic vehicle for experience, there, is not matter but Life and conscious desire. The basis of that world is not inconscient matter, like our world, but a conscious cosmic vital energy. In that plane it is the vital stuff and not material that is the basis of all configurations. Hence, Matter and Mind, in that plane, are subject to conscious Life and the natural freedom of the Mind is subject to vital desires and forces. Life principle is there the basis of all expressions just as material principle is in our plane.

The next higher grade in the ascending series is the plane where Mind is the dominating principle, and, *as such*, the Mind is there free from the shackles of its material vital pre-occupations and its demand overrides all others'. It is the mental substance that is the stuff out of which all shapes and forms are woven according as the Mind directs. The relations of the Mind with other objects are no longer guided by the law of physical or vital relations with which we are familiar. It is a world of subtle relations, subtle forms and subtle operations of which we have no experience. Thereafter there are still higher and higher planes in the ascending series dominated by more and more subtle principles, the Supramental, or still higher principle of pure Bliss or pure Being which replace the Mind and we may enter into the ranges of

illuminated Divine Existence, some of which were figured in Indian religions as the *Brahmaloka* or *Goloka*. It is in fact a hierarchy from the less subtle to the more subtle. Hence we have to conceive that "all cosmic existence is a complex harmony and does not finish with the limited range of consciousness in which the ordinary human mind and life is content to be imprisoned".¹ There is an ascending series of substance of more and more subtlety and flexibility; and the more subtle is the principle the more free is it from its divinely-imposed bondages and, *as such*, more powerful and more permanent than the gross.

In the light of the foregoing analysis we may now stop to ask ourselves, how the aforesaid gradations affect the possibilities of our material existence? The answer is indicated in the following pattern of the cosmic extension.

None of the planes of consciousness in the ascending series is completely cut off or detached from that which precedes it or that which follows it. The manifestation of the Spirit is such that each of the fundamental principles, namely, Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind and so on, contains the elements of all the others in a state of latency. Every particle of matter is instinct with all the other elements in a state of latency and that is why Matter has not ended with gases or physical forces alone. Out of the apparent inconscience and immobility of Matter have gradually evolved Life and Mind and must eventually evolve Supermind. These principles that lay asleep in

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVI, p. 310

the bosom of Matter have to gradually wake up and evolve by the divine urge of expression from below and a superior pressure from the kindred planes above. As a result of this double persuasion from below and above, all the principles shall gradually manifest in the material being in greater and greater effulgence and thereby the physical-vital-mental formation, that is to say, the body, life and consciousness of man have to outgrow their present limitations and become a proper receptacle to hold the divine effulgence.

Man would not achieve anything greater than what his present limitations indicate if his being were limited to the possibilities of his gross physical body with which we are familiar. But we have been assured by ancient occult lore that there are other and subtler sheaths behind the physical body and this gross density is not all of our substance. We learn from ancient vedantic knowledge that there are five sheaths of our substance, namely, the material, the vital, the mental, the ideal, and the spiritual or beatific (*Annamaya*, *Pranamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vijnanamaya* and the *Chinmaya* or *Anandamaya*) and these are said to be the materials of three bodies, namely, gross physical, subtle and causal (*Sthula*, *Sukshma* and *Karana*): the soul personality simultaneously dwells in all these bodies and it is possible for us to become conscious in our other bodies. The Hathayogins and Tantriks of India had reduced this to a science and found out subtle physical exercises by which the closed centres could be opened up. These practices often gave them

such control over the physical life force as to enable them to do away with many indispensable habits of the body with impunity.

We have already discussed in a previous chapter that behind and above our waking mentality there is a vast range of consciousness, the subliminal, the Psychic and the Central Being, in short, from the subconscious to the Superconscious of which we become aware now and then by some mysterious process. We shall have much greater knowledge and Ananda if we can be awake to these subliminal parts of our being and impose their law on this our outer being. Similarly, behind this gross physical body there are subtler bodies, as we said, with a finer law and a greater power that supports it. By entering into the ranges of consciousness of this subtle substance we can impose its law and power on this gross physical body, life and habits and gradually change them. Thus it seems that the evolution of a nobler and subtler physical existence, free from the trammels of this gross materiality and all its attending afflictions, is well within the bounds of possibility.

Matter has already undergone some transformation during the course of evolution. The original condition of Matter underwent some changes to become the fertile soil out of which sprouted the vegetable world. Matter underwent further changes when it came to be the bodies of the lower animals. Today, on the level of human beings, Matter has undergone further transformation with a view to be the proper vehicle of the mental

principle. The complexity of the cortex and the ganglion is no more than a state of matter very much changed from its original condition.

Similarly, in the ascent of man from mentality to Supramentality, the physical substance has to get rid of the limitations of gross physicality, vitality and mentality and ascend to corresponding heights of an ideal or causal body which may be the fit receptacle to hold the Supramental principle which will weed out all the imperfections of our nature with a view to a radical transformation of our present physical-vital-mental formation.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SEVENFOLD CHORD OF BEING

SRI Aurobindo has laid down that the nature of the Divine is the triune principle of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss which is the ultimate Reality behind all cosmic manifestations. This Reality gradually involved Itself in inconscient materiality and It is emerging from its self-imprisonment in Matter through a slow and difficult process of evolution. Creation has therefore been described as "a movement between two involutions".¹ In this chapter we shall examine the mode how the said Reality descended to creation and the gradations between its movement of descent and ascent. Consciousness has two aspects, "illuminating and effective, state and power of self-awareness and state and power of self-force";² just as fire has two aspects, namely, its capacity for illumination and its power of burning; these are the two inseparable aspects of the same thing, fire. Similarly, by the aspect of self-awareness the Divine consciousness sees or becomes aware of its infinite potentialities and by Its power of self-force It casts out for manifestation one order of truth out of the infinite possibilities involved in It. Supermind, which is said to be the Fourth or the intermediate principle

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XIV, p. 158.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVII, p. 316.

performs this double function simultaneously, namely, sees Its infinite potentialities with a divine self-awareness and selects and manifests one order of truths out of them according to their inherent truth. Supermind is the creative activity of Sachchidananda, it is the Real-Idea, the Knowledge-Will in which a divine Knowledge and Will is blended in perfect unision. The nature of this aspect has been discussed in extenso in more than one previous chapters. It is the divine Gnosis which makes the creation move between the principles of Unity and Multiplicity. It proceeds from the One to the Many and creates an apparent, not real, division and demarcation with a view to an eventual Unity...*abibhaktam ca bhuteshu vibhaktamiba ca sthitam*. It casts a spell of ignorance and division in the minds of human beings and it is this aspect again which is the cause of the persistent aspiration in the human heart to exceed its limitations and ascend to the land of Light and Deliverance.

We have also seen in some previous chapters that Mind, Life and Matter, as we know them now, are the subordinate principles of higher divine principles. Mind is a subordinate principle of the Supermind, Life a subordinate power of the force aspect of Sachchidananda and Matter is a form of the divine substance. All these are the subordinate aspects of the higher principles in a state of ignorance and division where the sense of Unity is completely lost in a sense of division and distinction. Apart from the above three lower principles of mind, life and matter, there is a fourth principle which is the soul;

it wears a double aspect in us, namely, the Desire soul or the Ego, in front, and the true Psychic Being behind our surface consciousness and as the centre of our individualisation.

Delight is the secret of creation; it is a play of the self-delight of the Divine Being. But we miss this delight in our surface-consciousness on account of our egoistic ignorance, and the sooner we are able to exceed our present limitations of the surface ego, the sooner would we taste the Divine delight of Being which is now held back in the subliminal, below the threshold of our outer consciousness, and in our Superconscient being. In rare moments of illumination we do get a glimpse of the Delight that is the Truth and sustenance of this world of seeming discords and disharmonies. It is delight out of which welled out this world, it is Delight that is sustaining it and it is delight towards which it is proceeding. In short, from Pure Existence, the Divine descends to Cosmic Being through the play of its Conscious-Force and Bliss and the medium of the Supermind; and It is now ascending or proceeding from inconscient matter through a gradually developing Life and Mind towards its complete manifestation in infinite centres through the medium of the Supermind. Thus instinct with the divine urge for self-manifestation, we are proceeding step by step with a gradually awakening Psychic Being, through higher and higher levels of illumination towards our divine destiny.

Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, otherwise termed, the

Higher Trinity, is the source of all cosmic manifestations. In fact, this universe is a self-expression of its essential reality. The Supermind, the creative aspect of the Divine, is the Fourth principle. The aforesaid four principles, namely, Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind, belong to the Upper hemisphere or *Parardha* and out of them have gradually developed, by self-limitation, the lower principles of Matter, Life, Psyche and Mind, these latter belong to the Lower hemisphere or *Aparardha*. It is in the region of the Upper hemisphere that the Supreme Divine awakens from His state of self-absorbed rapture to a particular Truth of His own Being and it is His creative aspect, the Supermind, that casts out that Truth for manifestation; the result is the lower trilogy of Matter, Life and Mind, the subordinate principles of the lower hemisphere where the sense of unity has gradually receded behind a sense of division and distinction for an ultimate unity. Along with this trilogy, there is another principle, Psyche, as we have said, which is a subordinate principle of the Divine Bliss.

Existence	...	...	...	Matter
Consciousness-Force	...			Life
Bliss	...	...	...	Psyche
Supermind	...	...	...	Mind

These are the eight principles or the chords of Being that are involved in creation. The higher Triplicity of

Existence-Consciousness-Force-Bliss of the Higher Hemisphere and the lower principles of Matter, Life, Psyche and Mind with the Supermind as the nodus connecting or mediating between the two hemispheres. Supermind is the Fourth principle in the order of descent as also the Fourth principle in the ascent—*Turiyam dhama*—the fourth poise of existence, Psyche being the principle behind, the soul principle behind Matter, Life and Mind. It is not to be supposed that the aforesaid principles are distinct and separate realities; the higher principles are the four aspects of the one Supreme Reality, and each of the lower principles, as is shown above, is a subordinate or veiled expression of each of the higher principles. They are the seven (with the addition of Psyche, the eight) chords of Being. Matter is a veiled aspect of the Existentiality of Brahman, Life is a veiled aspect of Consciousness-Force, Psyche a spark of the Divine Bliss and Mind a veiled expression of the Supermind; there is nothing in this world that is not a more or less partial expression of one or the other Truths of Sachchidananda. It is the Supermind, the Divine Mother, that will break the veil of ignorance from Mind and will make possible the descent of the Light and Power of the higher to the lower hemisphere and help the transformation of the lower nature. It is the Divine Mother that has to come down to this creation for the upliftment of benighted humanity to the Light and Bliss of the upper hemisphere—it is upon this possibility that rests the promise of a Divine Life.

A vast universal self-delight is the cause, essence and object of cosmic existence. Though this Delight is not yet apparent on the surface the preoccupation of the whole existence must be the seeking of this essential Delight of Being; and to the extent that one discovers one's real being, that one awakens to this secret ecstasy and the joy of union with the Divine in Love and the rapture of possession.

Existence, Consciousness and Bliss would not manifest themselves at all into a fixed order or relation without the play of the fourth term Supermind—the Divine Gnosis—which fixes determined relations out of infinite possibilities as has been already mentioned. But this Supermind is nothing else than an aspect of Sachchidananda Himself and brings out nothing else than a fixed order of truths of His own Being.

The Higher Triplicity is thus the essence of creation. But the lower trilogy of Mind, Life and Matter are equally important to this cosmic manifestation not necessarily in the crude and ignorant form and condition we know them to be at present, but at least in some other form or kind of action, however luminous or subtle. For "Mind is essentially that faculty of the Supermind which measures and limits, which fixes a particular centre and views from that the cosmic movement and its interactions".¹ It is true that the mind need not be so limited in a particular plane, but this kind of cosmic manifesta-

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVII, p. 323.

tion would not be possible without delimitation or erection of fixed and exclusive centres or standpoints and Mind is essentially the instrument of such division, distinction or delimitation. Without a kind of limitation there would have been no cosmos but only a universal self-diffusion, as if, the Supreme Being is musing within Himself without giving any definite shape or form to His musing; just as a poet may be musing and musing without giving his musings any expression; but if he has to create or produce any poem he has to limit his musings and make his thoughts run through a fixed channel. This is exactly the function of Mind, namely, fixing limits, giving shape and form to formless truths.

Life and Matter or Form are similarly indispensable for this cosmic manifestation. Life, as we have seen, is a subordinate principle of the Force-aspect of the Divine Consciousness and it determines the force and action in fixed centres of consciousness. It is a divided action of the undivided energy, but its divided action is necessary to support a cosmic harmony. The working of Life may be very different in other planes but it is always the principle of dynamis, vitality,—the principle which was known as *Vayu* or *Prana* by the Indian thinkers.

Similarly, Matter, which is a form of the Divine substance, may be very different from what is now. It may be much more subtle, much less rigid and gross. But it is indispensable with a view to making possible some determinations of form which would not be otherwise possible, as we have already seen in a previous chapter;

it is Matter that is the basis of fixed forms and determinations in this world. There could be creations in a million other ways, but if there had to be a creation of names and forms, such as we see around us, the Divine substance had to wear this look of gross materiality on the basis of which durable shapes and forms are possible.

As all the aforesaid principles are involved in this creation, the evolution of the sevenfold power of being is bound to be its destiny. *Initially* one or the other of the aforesaid principles may be apparent, but even so, the others are involved wherever one of them is apparent; for instance, so far as this world is concerned, only one principle, Matter, was apparent on the surface; but Matter was instinct with all the other principles and that is why they are gradually evolving out of their involution in Matter. Life appeared from Life involved, mind appeared from Mind hidden behind Matter and there is no reason to suppose that this process will stop here. Hence Supermind will appear from its self-concealment behind Matter and will thus bring about the complete manifestation of the Triune Glory of Sachchidananda which is the essential Truth behind all configurations.

The last question remains to be answered: where is this consummation going to take place? Where is the Supramental manifestation going to happen? Is this terrestrial plane destined to be hallowed by the flood of Supramental Light or it is going to take place in some other worlds beyond? If the advent of man who now

stands today between Spirit and Matter has no other destiny than to wade through the agonies of this earthly life till his deliverance by self-annulment in Nirvana or self-immersion in featureless Brahma, then, indeed, the curtain has to be rung down on all our hopes and aspirations for the eventual transformation of human nature and a Divine Life on earth. But Sri Aurobindo says, "the ancient seers believed in this possibility for man and held it to be his divine destiny".¹

"In this progressive world, with the human creature in whom the Divine spark has been kindled, real wisdom is likely to dwell with the higher aspiration than with the denial of aspiration",² inspite of the trend of modern thought to the contrary. For, the Truth is already there hidden in the human heart and our persistent aspiration is its constant call for release from its self-imposed concealment.

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVII, p. 325.

² *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVII, p. 325.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SUPERMIND, MIND AND THE OVERMIND MAYA

HAVING told us, in the last chapter, of this creation as the play of the Divine Self-Delight and of the deployment of the Higher Trinity, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, into the sevenfold chord of Being, with Psyche behind as the eighth, Sri Aurobindo now proceeds to examine in greater details the process through which the Spirit lapsed into the Ignorance. We have seen, in previous chapters, how the Supermind, the Lord of creation, cast upon himself veil after veil and thereby gradually involved Himself in inconscience. And how out of the inconscience emerged Matter Life and Mind as a prelude to the complete emergence of the Supermind from His self-imprisonment in Matter. The Lord of creation, as it were, gradually sank into the sleep of inconscience and He is gradually reawakening through the process of evolution. This, in short, is said to be the meaning and significance of the creative activity.

It is said that division of consciousness is the cause of the ignorance in which these lower principles of Matter, Life and Mind have been struggling; but there is nothing in the original nature of these principles which necessitated a fall from knowledge into ignorance. For we have

seen that Mind is a distorted reflection of the Supermind which is its essence, Life is a divided working of the Conscious-Force of the Divine and Matter is no other than a form of the substance of the Original Existence. These are, in reality, subordinate principles of the Higher Trinity and there is no compelling reason why this division of consciousness and consequent ignorance should come about in their nature. Ornaments made of gold must be essentially golden, however covered with dirt they may be, and they are bound to get back their shine of gold after a brush up. What is it then that obscured the Light of the Supermind from mental consciousness, which has, in consequence, to tumble through its terrestrial journey in ignorance and division? Our consciousness is said to be a "half light between the full day of the Supramental Truth and the night of the material inconscience".¹ We are assured that this ignorance is the result of an exclusive concentration of the Divine Conscious-Force on one aspect of the Reality, but it is not our destiny to wallow in ignorance and division till the end of the chapter. We shall exceed our present limitations and recover the Light and Power that is said to have been veiled from us at present.

But the gulf between this half-lit consciousness, we know as mind, and the plenitude of the Supramental Truth-consciousness is indeed so wide that a transition from the one to the other seems impossible. There are

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol I, Chapter XXVIII, p. 327.

gradations between the two levels of consciousness, namely, our mind and the Supermind. Our mind is a seeker of Truth, while the Supermind is Truth-consciousness Itself; one is a dealer in possibilities, trying to proceed from the known to the unknown through errors and half-truths and it can at best build up a partial knowledge, while the other is in constant possession of integral Truth. It is conceded that our mind is to a great extent hampered by life and body and it has not the freedom of the original Mind principle; but mind at its best is essentially an instrument of ignorance. Indeed so disparate the two seem to be that without some intermediate principle between this Mind in ignorance and Mind in knowledge it will be futile to expect a transition to the higher level of consciousness,—how can one mount a loft without stairs or negotiate a gulf without a bridge? It may even be contended that there are other radical transitions in this world, such as, from Matter to Life, from inanimation to animation and so on; but in fact there are infinite gradations from the one to the other and they are not so abrupt as they seem to be on the surface. There is, here, no such wide gulf as seems to exist between Supramental Truth-Consciousness and the Mind in ignorance.

Next, assuming for a moment that gradations do exist, they are outside the range of the human consciousness to which our normal mind has no entry. Our mental consciousness has a limited range and ordinarily we are not conscious of anything that is below or above it; for

instance, we have no awareness of things and happenings on the sub-mental or Supramental levels. That is why we have no means of communication with the animal, because it is below our range of consciousness. Our power of hearing, for instance, has a limited range and we can hear sounds only when they come within its purview, and any sound outside that limit is inaudible to us. The supposed gradations, even if they exist, belong to a higher level of consciousness which is above the range of our mental consciousness and we have no means of communicating with it. In a way it may be a closed book to us. If therefore we fail to have any contact with these higher gradations they cannot serve as links between our Ignorance and the Knowledge we aspire to. Must then Nature cry a halt to any further evolutionary progress?

On a more careful examination of our mental experiences we shall find that what we consider to be the normal state of our mind, that is to say, that it has no entry into or no contact whatsoever with the higher levels of consciousness, is not at all correct. There are veiled or half-veiled passages which connect the mind with the higher grades of consciousness. Let us take Intuition, for instance; intuition is none of the rusty weapons of the human mind for the acquisition of a partial knowledge. It brings to the mind a direct vision of Truth and its source is somewhere beyond the limits of our human mentality. It is a projection from the higher grades of consciousness into the human mind. "Intuition" says Sri Aurobindo, "is an edge of Light thrust out by the secret Supermind".

Before the intuition comes to the surface it is no doubt mixed up with a lot of mental stuff and it is difficult to feel a pure intuitive urge, yet, the very fact of these intuitive flashes, however mixed with mental stuff they might be, establishes an indisputable truth that there are passages of entry or communication between mind and the higher ranges of the Spirit, otherwise, these intuitive flashes could not come within the ken of our surface-consciousness. There are also other experiences which indicate that the mind can exceed its normal habits in various other ways. This will be evident from the following.

Impersonality, for instance, is a quality which is a characteristic of higher mental planes; our greatest drawback is our ego-centricity. We can normally think only in terms of our own ego, our personal comforts, personal views, personal likes and dislikes; in short, every little thing in our lives is judged by the norm of our personal likes and dislikes and not on its intrinsic value. This constant sense of a narrow personality is a snag which it is hard to get rid of. Yet, the mind does exceed its narrow ego-centric consciousness and expands into a sense of impersonality at rare moments of mental detachment. Then again we come across the phenomenon of 'genius' which is in reality a penetration of a ray of light of a superior level of consciousness into our human mentality. Genius would perform acts or solve problems in a manner which the normal human mind is not capable of doing. 'Inspiration' is another phenomenon the source of which is

unmistakable. It opens out before the mind a world of vision and knowledge to which ordinarily it has no access. An inspired artist or poet exceeds himself, for the time being, and often he is himself surprised at his own productions when his mind relapses into its normal state. Lastly, the spiritual experiences of the seekers of Truth open out before the mind the gates of entry into the higher levels of consciousness and the possibility of self-exceeding. We should therefore accept these instances as unmistakable evidence of the fact that the human mind is capable of exceeding itself in several directions and that there are lines of contact or veiled or partially veiled passages that lead to the higher grades of consciousness, unless with an obscurantism characteristic of our ignorant human mentality we refuse to perceive the truth.

Our mind is said to be an instrument of ignorance. This ignorance is multiple. We are ignorant of our true selves, ignorant of the true nature of the creation and ignorant of the Absolute, the eternal source of all becomings; it will be an act of self-finding that will gradually enable us to know the real nature of the objective world and eventually lead us to the ultimate Truth. To all intents and purposes we take our outer being, consisting of our surface consciousness and the body to be the complete human individual. But in reality our mind or surface-consciousness is only a narrow strip of a much vaster region which is our real being. Sri Aurobindo says, "we are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary per-

sonality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence".¹ Behind this surface-consciousness there is our subliminal being consisting of an Inner Mind, Inner Life and Inner Subtle-physical entity; behind the subliminal there is the Psychic Being or soul-personality which is the real centre of our individualisation. And above the entire region is our Central Being or Jivatman which is superconscient to us now. This human individual is a multiple personality; it is the Central Being that presides over each individual and casts its influence on him indirectly through its representative at every level of the human consciousness. For instance, there are the Psychic Being, the Mental being or Inner mental, the Vital being or the Inner Vital and the Physical being or the Inner physical; all of them are the representatives of the Central Being and they act through the instrumentation of our outer or Surface being upon which they constantly exert a subtle influence for its proper guidance. Our ego or the Desire soul, which is now the distorted or frontal aspect of the Psychic Being, has no direct knowledge of this truth of our being, although impulses from the subliminal do come to us occasionally through chinks in the wall of ignorance that shuts out the surface-consciousness from the depth and knowledge of the subliminal self.

We may pause here to ask the question, is it possible for us to have a peep into the superior gradations of our being?

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 398.

Yes, there are two successive movements of our consciousness by which we can have access to those superior gradations of our consciousness; the process is indeed difficult but not impossible. First, by a going inward we can break through the wall of ignorance, between our surface consciousness and the rest of our being, and thus be directly aware of our subliminal self. We shall then discover in those inner parts our greater self, a subliminal consciousness whose capacity for knowledge is much more extensive than that of our surface-self. It has a greater dynamism, greater insight into truth without the instrumentation of the senses which is beyond the capacity of our present outer mentality. It has the power of a direct awareness and a direct communication with universal forces. By going still deeper inside we shall find our real self, the Psychic being and the finding of this our real self will enable us to ascend to higher and higher levels of consciousness, into domains beyond the capacity of our present human mentality. The finding of our true self will give us an expanding awareness of the truth of the cosmos, will bring about a realisation that the objective world is not something distinct and separate from ourselves and imposed on us from outside, as we normally suppose it to be; we shall realise that our real self is the true self of all beings; it is the Lord that pervades the cosmos, it is the Lord that has taken form in us, has become each and everything—*Vasudeva Sarvamiti*. Thus by the two successive movements of going inwards and ascending upwards we rise into a spiritual state which is

far beyond the level of our surface consciousness. We rise to superior heights of greater and greater illumination where the Truth and knowledge of the higher regions seem to pour into us and dispel the gloom of egoistic ignorance and incapacity. Thus by degrees, we rise to a level, intermediate between the Supermind and our mental ignorance, which is luminous with the Light of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness.

Now Sri Aurobindo is describing, evidently from his own spiritual experiences, the gradations, or the steps of the ascent to the superior grades of consciousness. With the gradual ascent of consciousness into greater and greater heights, there seems to be a "downpour of masses of a spontaneous knowledge which assumes the nature of Thought, but has a different character from the process of thought to *which we are accustomed*."¹ In short the mind becomes capable of taking a more or less integral view of all its experiences. There is an ascension to greater and greater heights of consciousness, *first*, to what is termed the 'Higher Mind', and still beyond it to the 'Illumined Mind' and further beyond to what has been termed as 'Intuitive Mind'; these are the levels of gradual ascension where the consciousness has a more or less direct knowledge of Truth; it has no longer to go through the tedious process of building up indirect knowledge *which alone we are capable of at present*. Ascending further, the mind reaches the level of Intuition where we shall always

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVIII, p. 334.

have Truth-Vision, Truth-Thought, Truth-Sense, Truth-Feeling; it will be a direct seeing of Truth which will exclude all possibilities of error and ignorance unlike those of our present mental vision and thought and sense and feeling which are more often than not a mixture of half-truths and errors at best. When the mind proceeds further *right up* to the source of this Intuition it ascends to the Overmental level where there is a higher and greater Intuition and above that lie the Supramental ranges. This Overmind is the intermediate principle we are seeking; it is the real mediator between the Supermind and the Mind in ignorance, the original determinant of all movements which led to ignorance and division. This Overmind is the power which gradually cast the entire lower hemisphere into Knowledge-Ignorance. It is the link we were seeking between Supreme Knowledge and Cosmic Ignorance.

Overmind is said to be a delegate of the Supermind Consciousness, the first parent of division and ignorance. We shall now try to understand the import and significance of all these terms as far as possible. With our present mental capacity it is not possible to form a precise conception of the nature and working of this wonder principle, Overmind, but we shall try to understand some of its functions in the following paragraphs.

Supermind is the creator, It could directly manifest itself in creation, why then does the overmind come in? What is the function that the overmind has to perform? The answer will be evident if we just examine the trend

or nature of the creative activity. For, it seems that this creation is a "Lila of spiritual involution and evolution", that is to say, Spirit involved itself in material inconscience and ignorance and It is now gradually releasing itself from its self-imprisonment in Matter and the consequent ignorance and division through a slow and difficult process of evolution. This inconscience and ignorance would not have been possible if the Supramental Light had been directly cast into creation; hence it was necessary to gradually shade the Light of the Supermind by casting more or less transparent veils round the halo of the Supramental Effulgence. Thus it was that overmind came in, overmind is the first haze round the plenary Light of the Supermind.

In point of fact, the overmind is no other power than the Supermind Itself with a thin veil cast upon it, and, therefore, overmind is termed an 'inferior Supermind', which, though luminous with the Light and Knowledge of the Supermind breaks it up into separate aspects and puts a dominant stress on each of these aspects separately. In the overmental plane there is indeed an awareness of the essential unity of things but this awareness is not integral as in the Supermind; it is only an awareness of unity in a *spiritual cognition*, unlike the Supermind where this sense of essential unity is an intimate and *everpresent* secret. Besides, the action of the overmind is not directly determined by this sense of oneness or unity.

Thus it is in the overmind or overmental level that the first sense of separation or distinction begins, hence it is

termed the first parent of division and distinction. It recognises separation, though on the basis of unity. In our present mental cognition we view things as distinct and separate from one another, there is an everpresent sense of division and exclusiveness in our cognition; whereas in the overmind there is also a perception of difference, but there the consciousness is global and not exclusive like ours, that is to say, in the overmental cognition these differences are not irreconcilable opposites but co-existent correlatives—their sum total making up the total truth. To the overmind comprehension totality is constituted by adding, by uniting or coalescing *independent realities*, but in Supramental comprehension there is no conception of *independent realities* and no totality is built up by adding up independent realities but the sense of the essential unity of things is its ever present secret. Supermind sees the Many as the truth of the One and sees the One as the truth of the Many; hence there is no question of recognising the Many as in any way independent of the One, or the adding up of apparently separate entities to form the One. Yet, as distinct from ours “an overmind world would be a world of harmony, the world of ignorance in which we live is a world of disharmony and struggle”;¹ for, in the overmental plane, each and every distinct individual while creating his own world is capable of harmonious interplay with all the others.

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Chapter XXVIII, p. 342.

The One Supreme Reality has infinite powers, infinite aspects and infinite emanations; each one of these powers or aspects may be taken to be a separate Godhead, and thus there may be millions and millions of Gods; each considers himself a separate deity and acts sometimes in unison and sometimes even in apparent opposition with other Godheads; all these Gods are overmental beings; their consciousness is overmental in the sense that, while realising their essential unity with the Supreme Reality in *Spiritual cognition*, their stress is always upon the apparently separate existences; the overmental plane is said to be the highest plane of the Gods.

In a previous chapter we have been told of the two hemispheres, the Upper and the Lower—Parardha and Aparardha. The upper hemisphere is the region of absolute Light and Knowledge and is composed of Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind—Sat, Chit, Ananda and Mahas—and the lower hemisphere is the region of darkness, ignorance and division and is composed of Mind, Life and Matter; Overmind is the line that separates the two hemispheres. The Light of the Upper hemisphere gradually wanes as it descends step by step to Ignorance and division, and, overmind is the plane where the first initiative towards division is taken. But in the overmind itself, which is in a sense the inferior Supermind, the full halo of the Supramental Light is just shaded with a transparent veil—"The face of the Truth is covered by a golden lid". It is from this plane that the stress towards gradual differentiation

starts and initiates the movement which culminates in Avidya; on account of this action the overmind is termed the *vidya-avidyamai maya*—while aware of the unity as the support of all things, all becomings, its stress is on its power of multiplicity, division and differentiation. Further action of this dividing principle of the overmind goes on, drawing veil upon veil on the face of the Truth until unity hides completely behind multiplicity.

As consciousness descends further, the stress on division and distinction increases and at the level of Mind the unity becomes more and more vague and multiplicity becomes the dominant fact. At this level of the Cosmic Mind there is a further separation from the Supramental Truth. In the Overmind there is indeed the first veiling of the Truth, but the veil is transparent; in the Cosmic Mind the veil of separation becomes opaque and, there is no awareness or realisation of its unity with the Spirit. It may have an intellectual comprehension of the Truth only but not a spiritual realisation of it like the Overmind.

To sum up, then, the Supermind has an *integral awareness* of the Truth or Unity which, to it, is an ever present reality; the Overmind has a *Spiritual realisation* of the Truth, that is to say, a realisation of the Truth in a *spiritual cognition*; and the Cosmic Mind has only an intellectual comprehension of the Truth. Thus the knowledge and awareness of unity or the Truth is gradually receding to the background as the Divine Consciousness is gradually descending, step by step, from the Supramental level, through the Overmind and Mind

down to Matter and Inconscience where the Fall from Light and Knowledge is complete.

It looks as if it was indeed for the Delight of a novel experience that the Divine descended to creation, and, from the very inception Sachchidananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss—plunged into His apparent opposite; Existence seemed to be Non-Existence, Consciousness put on the garb of Inconscience and the Divine Delight of Being concealed Itself under a vast cosmic insensibility; the phenomenal world we see before us, is instinct with all these aspects of the Supreme Divine who has plunged into His own shadow for the Delight of creation. Hence the triple aspect of Sat-Chit-Ananda is bound to manifest on this earth, the Ignorance and all the incapacities of an ego-centric consciousness is bound to widen itself into the overmental and supramental consciousness and knowledge; the Divine Ananda, which is even now dormant behind the fleeting joys and enduring sorrows of our lives will establish Itself as a Truth of the Divine Delight of Being. What was involved must evolve and if the human pilgrim has to wade through Life and Death and all the poignant experiences of divided existence, it is no more than the ransom that has to be paid for his deliverance from this Fall from Knowledge.

The task seems to be gigantic, the difficulties appalling but not insurmountable. It will appear from the trend of the descent of Consciousness that this 'Fall' from the Upper Regions was gradual and not headlong. Overmind, as we have seen, is the first step in the descent where there

is the first turning away from the integral knowledge of Unity; as it descends step by step towards inconscience it gradually modifies itself by creating lower and lower orders of consciousness where the knowledge is shrouded by degrees till it is completely lost in Matter. Thus in its descent the Overmind originates the region of Intuition where there is a better and more direct comprehension of Truth than it is possible in our normal human consciousness; although it is a plane of Ignorance, this Intuitive region is still dense with Light derived from the Upper Hemisphere. This Intuitive region stretches, as it were, between the Overmind and our normal mental consciousness and it has a gradation, namely, Intuitive Mind, Illumined Mind, Higher Mind. Even to the normal human mind Intuition does carry flashes of enlightenment from the higher regions, but they are fragmentary and too much mixed with mental stuff to be recognised in its purity or be acted upon. But this present incapacity is bound to be chased away by the gradual emergence of the Higher principles that are already involved behind our mind, life and body.

Thus assured of an ascending gradation from our normal human mind to the higher regions of consciousness, which now seems to be beyond its range, we have to gradually open ourselves to our Inner Being and our Inmost Being which will give us the key to the mysteries and Truth of this cosmic existence; we have to ascend to the higher regions, step by step, till all ignorance is dispelled by the Light from above.

The overmental plane is, thus, the first step in the descent of Consciousness, it is the last step in the ascent from this lower region of Ignorance and Division and the last hurdle to be crossed by the Soul in stepping into the Light and Truth of the upper hemisphere. It now seems that a radical transformation of our nature is well within the bounds of possibility and Divine Life on earth is man's ultimate destiny.

